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# **Focusing the Lens: The Role of Travel and Photography in the Personal and Working Lives of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of DPhil in the  
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**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**

**CLAUDIA LOUISE FIELD: CANDIDATE FOR DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
(D PHIL)**

**FOCUSING THE LENS: THE ROLE OF TRAVEL AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN  
THE PERSONAL AND WORKING LIVES OF VANESSA BELL AND DUNCAN  
GRANT**

**SUMMARY**

This thesis addresses how the photographic image contributed to the formation of the public and private identities of the artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. I propose that Bell and Grant primarily conceptualised photography as a medium of movement and it is this element that defines photographic images of them and their circle. Further, I suggest this definitive photographic element of their work situates them and the Bloomsbury Group in the development of English modernism in a new way.

Chapter One explores the presence of movement in travel and tourism related photographic images from Bell and Grant's own generation and previous generations in their families. It compares images of alpine adventures, colonial life and first journeys to Europe alongside sections of personal correspondence by both generations offering a 'verbal sketch' of the sights and sounds of the travel experience.

Chapter Two considers how the photographic reproduction informs the development of public identity through an analysis of how Bell, Grant, Clive Bell and Julia Margaret Cameron used photographic images in the public arena and how contemporary media used photographs in assessments of their work.

Chapter Three focuses on the nature of private physical and psychological photographic exchanges among both Julia Margaret Cameron's circle and the Bloomsbury Group and looks at paintings by Bell and Grant that were inspired by personal and private photographs in their possession.

Chapter Four examines how the visual expression of monumentality and movement in photographs taken by Bell, Grant and their predecessors demonstrates a clear interest in making connections with past artistic and photographic traditions. The culmination of this discussion identifies defining features of the Bloomsbury photograph as created by Vanessa Bell and shows how it incorporates movement as a primary element of her photographic aesthetic.

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to this or any other University for the award of any other degree

Claudia Louise Field

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Arts & Humanities Research Council for funding this Collaborative Doctoral project.

I am grateful to my formal support networks at the University of Sussex and The Charleston Trust throughout my time researching and writing this thesis and during my time on maternity leave. At the University of Sussex my supervisors David Mellor and Meaghan Clarke provided expertise, enthusiasm and empathy. At The Charleston Trust all the staff and volunteers were welcoming and extremely helpful offering me information, cups of tea and even lifts in their cars! I would like to express my gratitude to Anne Olivier Bell whose donation of an extensive collection of photographs in 2006 and 2007 initiated this Collaborative Doctoral project.

I felt ‘a part’ of Charleston while I was working there and am grateful for the volunteer opportunities it allowed, from working as a room steward to helping at the Charleston and Small Wonder festivals. Former Director Colin McKenzie was always full of energy and enthusiasm for my project. Former Curator Wendy Hitchmough acted as my institution-based supervisor and she gave me the benefit of her unparalleled knowledge of Charleston’s collection, pushed me to meet my capabilities and provided much appreciated personal and professional support. Darren Clarke, now Head of Curatorial Services at Charleston has been an invaluable colleague throughout my time there. I offer my thanks to authorities on Bloomsbury whom I have met through my connections with Charleston and with whom I discussed my research including Frances Spalding, Simon Watney and Marion Dell.

I would like to express my gratitude to the staff at a number of institutions particularly the Tate Gallery Archives, the British Library, Special Collections at the University of Sussex and St. Peter’s House Library, University of Brighton. At all of these institutions I had assistance not only my research but also with gathering together and physically moving material. As someone with mobility difficulties this has been much appreciated.

I offer my unending thanks to my parents Jackie and Graham and my sister Katherine who offered additional pairs of eyes to drafts and cheered me on. I am particularly grateful to my Dad for the hours he spent reviewing the text.

Lastly this thesis is dedicated to my husband Jim for his patience, love and support in every way and to our daughter Josephine who was the other baby born during this time.

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## INTRODUCTION

Vanessa Bell (1879-1961), Duncan Grant (1885-1978) and many members of the Bloomsbury Group took, collected, posed in and used in their work a significant body of photographic images. These images included snapshots of family and friends, travel photographs, photographic reproductions from museums, galleries and magazines, images by carte de visite and cabinet photography studios, art photographs taken as works of art in themselves or to illustrate literary, moral or religious themes or historical events, and preparatory studies for use in later paintings. Many of the images are in the collection at Charleston, Bell and Grant's home and working environment in Firle East Sussex from 1916 to Grant's death in 1978 and they have not been explored in detail, particularly in relation to the developing vision and artistic output of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. This thesis demonstrates the significance, function, and currency of photography within the artistic domestic culture both at Charleston and abroad and more broadly investigates the Bloomsbury Group's visual definition of personal and cultural identity through photography.

### **Aims and Objectives of Methodological Approach**

This project is one of four Arts and Humanities Research Council Collaborative Doctoral Studentships that have been based at Charleston and focused on its collections, formalising a longstanding partnership between the House and the University of Sussex that began with Vanessa Bell's son Quentin Bell's tenure as Professor of Art History and Theory at the University from 1967 to 1975.

The aims and objectives of this Collaborative Doctoral Studentship as set out in the project brief were as follows:

- \*Consider the use of photography not only as part of the practice of Bell and Grant but as an aspect of how the Bloomsbury group established its identity
- \* Place the work of Bell and Grant within a broad context of artistic practice and art historical context and thereby provide the basis for a new analysis of its social and aesthetic significance

\* Undertake crucial original cataloguing of photographs and of other records of artistic work produced at Charleston.

In order to explore Bell and Grant's interactions with and use of photography this thesis examines a new archive of photographs of mainly Victorian carte de visite and cabinet photographs, donated to the Charleston Trust by Anne Olivier Bell in 2006 and 2007. These images have been analysed with photographs from Charleston's existing photographic collection that have not been previously discussed. Additionally this thesis connects Charleston's photographic collection to national and international photographic archives which contain photographs related to Bell and Grant and their families.<sup>1</sup>

The volume, range and timespan of images investigated, and an emphasis on providing access both visually and analytically to as many of these new and significant images as possible within the body of the thesis has resulted in a methodological approach centred around efforts to classify and group images in and between collections and archives.<sup>2</sup> This close reading of images and of the relationships between images has not left space within the thesis text to discuss in detail several existing theoretical issues and ideas which have shaped my methodological approach. The broader importance of this material must be acknowledged to show how it has informed arguments developed in thesis. The remainder of this introduction will briefly discuss these broader areas and point to the sections of thesis they have informed.

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<sup>1</sup> The photograph in Figure 1 is one of many typically used by biographers and scholars to provide a defining picture of the Bloomsbury circle and their bohemian and modern attitude to life, literature and the arts. I would argue that the photograph has equally significant roots in the formal conventions of visiting and commemoration of important life events via the lens of the Victorian photography studio. As such, it can be seen as "the photographic record [of] special events, excursions or junketings or occasions where guests were present; in a word to exceptional circumstances." A second example appears as Figure 2. Quotation: Q. Bell and A. Garnett, 'Introduction', in *Vanessa Bell's Family Album*, ed by Q. Bell and A. Garnett (London: Jill Norman & Hobhouse Ltd, 1981).

Other members of the Bloomsbury Circle including Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry and Lytton Strachey were also keen photographers who took the opportunity to capture their travels through the medium of photography as well as through paint and pen. Stella Duckworth Bell and Woolf's half-sister also photographed the Stephen-Duckworth family on holiday, particularly at Talland House in St Ives, mounting the images in albums now at the New York Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> Time constraints meant the cataloguing aspect of the original project brief could not be completed but is hoped that this process of classification and grouping will offer a new "way in" to photographic collections associated with the Bloomsbury Group.

## Periodization

There is an emphasis in the thesis on Vanessa Bell's photographic technique and matrilineal photographic inheritance via her Great Aunt Julia Margaret Cameron.<sup>3</sup> It has previously been noted that Bell's photographs can be viewed as "layered images of familial presences and absences" and these movements, both physical and psychological, will be traced here in a variety of ways.<sup>4</sup> This emphasis is in large part due to Bell's increased awareness of and engagement with photography compared to Duncan Grant. Grant's known uses of photography are also documented and this thesis offers the possibility that Grant involved photography in his artistic practice in ways that have not been previously identified.

In my view many of these photographs demonstrate that the distinction between the Bloomsbury Group and their Victorian forebears is not as clear as is often made out.<sup>5</sup> They show that Bloomsbury did not happen in a vacuum and that Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant were in a state of constant exchange with their past as well as their contemporary milieu.<sup>6</sup> The formation of public and private identities by an individual or group is an ongoing process of engagement with widely understood conventions. The form this engagement takes is either one of appropriation, a positive referencing or looking back to previous conventions, or one of opposition and the pushing forward of new ideas. The public and private self forms and continues forming through this continual exchange, by appropriating and/or opposing earlier conventions.

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<sup>3</sup> Proximity was evident to in a purely geographic sense when the Stephen's family stayed at Dimbola, the Cameron's former home in the summer of 1895 following Julia Stephen's death. Their time there is detailed in Vanessa Curtis's book *The Hidden Houses of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (London: Robert Hall, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> M. Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006) p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Note for example in Figures 1 and 2 that though the two images are taken nearly forty years apart the form of photographic commemoration of visiting remains similar.

<sup>6</sup> There is not room here for an example to cover the visual imagery (photographic or otherwise related to the Dreadnaught Hoax, which has been covered in extensive detail elsewhere, see: A. Stephen, 1936, *The "Dreadnought" Hoax*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1936, rpt. London: Chatto and Windus, 1983), V. Woolf, 'Manuscript fragment of talk given to the Women's Institute, 1940,' Appendix E. in Q. Bell, *Virginia Woolf, A Biography: Volume One, Virginia Stephen 1882-1912* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1972), pp. 214-216, Mellor, David A., Mellor, 'The Phoenix of English Painting': Figures of the Body in Duncan Grant, 1908-20, *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol.13, No.1, 2012, p. 56

In considering how Bell and Grant opposed and reworked earlier modes of representation reference to current scholastic interest in the usefulness and importance of perceiving the Edwardian period (1901-1910) as distinct from both the end of Victorianism and the onset of modernism is particularly helpful as it takes into account a formative time for Bell and Grant during which they were developing their personal and artistic identities.

In his introductory essay to a themed issue of *Visual Culture in Britain* entitled “Edwardian Art and its Legacies” Andrew Stephenson suggests that “the Edwardian era might be more productively located as producing the generation of writers, artists, designers and intellectuals who came to the fore in the decade after 1910, but were formed in and by the culture and events of that earlier decade with its world of urban and imperial expansion.”<sup>7</sup> Stephenson’s assertion supports the argument within this thesis that Bell and Grant engaged both positively and negatively with conventions of the past and present. Stephenson’s further proposal that the term ‘Edwardian’ be reconsidered to reflect a “...sophisticated and transnational culture,” and a people “... [who had a] sense of themselves as distinctively ‘modern’ and ‘global’ in outlook” is also an important point of reference.

Lynda Nead also focuses on the need to characterise the Edwardian period both more broadly yet distinctly defining the term ‘Edwardian sense’ as “...historical character or quality that differentiated itself from nineteenth century Victorianism but that, at the same time drew many elements from that epoch.”<sup>8</sup> In her chapter entitled “The Age of the “Hurrygraph”: Motion, Space and the Visual Image, ca. 1900” Nead discusses how new technologies in the fields of movement, communication and photography from the bicycle and motor car, to telegraph and handheld camera created new forms of visual perception and representation, while coexisting with older ways of being and moving in the world.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> A. Stephenson, Introduction , ‘Edwardian Art and its Legacies’, *Visual Culture in Britain* Vol.14, no. 1, March 2013, P.1, see also *Visual Culture in Britain*, “*Visual Culture and Taste in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> L. Nead, The Age of the “Hurrygraph”: Motion, Space and the Visual Image, ca. 1900”, *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design and Performance in Britain, 1901-1910*, ed. Morna O’Neill and Michael Hatt, (New Haven: The Yale Centre for British Art), p.. 100

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp.103, 106.

These considerations which are drawn out by both Andrew Stephenson and Lynda Nead, of the Edwardian period as one in which people referred back to earlier conventions while also viewing themselves as distinctively international and cosmopolitan informs arguments made within this thesis for the considering the combined significance of art, travel and photography in the development of the public and private identities of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and the Bloomsbury Group.<sup>10</sup>

### **Patterns of Taste and Class and Processes of Identity Construction**

Chapter Two and Three of this thesis discuss the differences between public and private photographic images associated with Bell and Grant, members of their families and their wider circle the Bloomsbury Group. In the context of the thesis public images can be understood as those images produced by and for public consumption while private images retain a more intimate circulation among family and friends. The way in which the individual or group engages with these public and private images (through appropriation or opposition) informs the formation of their own public and private identities. In turn photographic images can be said visually represent the exchange of the individual or group with wider conventions, both societal and familial.

Before considering these images it is important to gain a sense of the background they come from and to this end it is important to consider issues of class and taste as elements that provide a person's initial context for engaging with the world around them and which continue to develop and shape both the public and private identities of an individual and the visual images they consume.

Raymond Williams places the foundations of the Bloomsbury Group's identification with class and taste in the societal shift of the second half of the nineteenth century when the "comprehensive development and reform of the professional and cultural life of bourgeois England built, in fact, a new and very important professional and highly educated sector of the English upper class: very different in its bearings and values from either the old aristocracy or from the directly commercial bourgeoisie."<sup>11</sup> Remarking on the political and organizational involvement of members of the Bloomsbury Group he

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<sup>10</sup> A. Stephenson, Introduction 'Edwardian Art and its Legacies', p.15.

<sup>11</sup> R. Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction,' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, (London: Verso Editions, 1980), p. 159

suggests that they can be viewed as a “fraction” of their mainly upper class context because they broke away from the ideas and conventions of the dominant majority by relating to the lower classes ‘...as a matter of conscience: not in solidarity, nor in affiliation, but as an extension of what are still felt as personal or small-group obligations...’<sup>12</sup> This “...significant and sustained combination of dissenting influence and influential connection” was indicative in Williams view of how the Bloomsbury Group “...were at once against its dominant ideas and values and still willingly, in all immediate, part of it.”<sup>13</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu’s distinctions of class and taste are very clearly demonstrated in excerpts of letters of members of the Bloomsbury Group and their predecessors within this thesis, particularly as they relate to aesthetic appreciation of works of art. According to Bourdieu theories we can see Bloomsbury’s aesthetic tastes or conditionings as a direct result of the “*ease*, in the sense of both objective leisure and subjective facility” and of “...withdrawal from economic necessity” associated with their class.<sup>14</sup> In turn this combination of conditioning, ease, and lack of economic necessity, develops in Bourdieu’s view the ‘aesthetic disposition’, that ‘pure gaze’ which is viewed as “the only social accepted ‘right’ way of approaching the objects socially designated as works of art, that is, as both demanding and deserving to be approached with a specifically aesthetic intention capable of recognizing and constituting them as works of art.”<sup>15</sup> Within the private letters and published texts of members of the Bloomsbury Group we see this sense of aesthetic ‘rightness’ asserted again and again and within this thesis there is an attempt to draw out this assertion in a new way by addressing how it relates to Bloomsbury’s view of photography.

Current scholarship on the Edwardian period has identified several aspects of identity construction that can be related to Bell, Grant and the Bloomsbury Group and are discussed in this thesis. Andrew Stephenson, referring to previous arguments made by Peter Brooker identifies the “new woman, as one who is ‘...a conspicuous part of modernist engagement with contemporary life and [who] signal[s] [her] rejection of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 156, 162.

<sup>14</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of The Judgement of Taste*, (London: Routledge, 1979) pp. 154-156

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 29



conventional domesticity” and Stephenson further suggests that photography particularly provided women artists and writers “experimental ways of envisioning the self as modern, incorporating autobiographical narratives within modernist aesthetics.”<sup>16</sup> Vanessa Bell’s engagement with photography within her roles as artist, wife and mother demonstrates how she related to this societal shift and this is the focus of Chapters Three and Four of this thesis. Additionally Edwardian writers and artists were openly embracing non-Western pre-modern art, very differently to the ethnographic approach of the Victorian period, due in large part to increased opportunities to travel to and see such artefacts.<sup>17</sup> The Bloomsbury Group’s interest in this regard is highlighted through an analysis of picture post-card exchanges in Chapter Three of this thesis.

### **The development of networks and processes of exchange and dissemination in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The development of artistic networks and processes of exchange of which the artists and art critics of Bloomsbury were a part were a significant factor in attitudes of openness to new and existing artistic avenues in the Edwardian period. Andrew Stephenson points to vibrancy of London between 1901 and 1910 with its “art institutions, museums and galleries, art schools, art market and art publishing houses” as being a driving force in revitalizing existing artist societies which had been established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century such as the New English Art Club (established 1886), and the creation of societies that emerged with the new century including the Allied Artist Association, Camden Town Group and Modern Art Society.<sup>18</sup> All these groups attracted a domestic as well as international membership from Europe, America and the colonies of the British Empire.<sup>19</sup> The letters of Vanessa Bell suggest the collaborative nature of these exchanges and the Bloomsbury Group’s role within these artistic networks is traced in Chapter Two of the thesis.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Stephenson, “Edwardian Art and its Legacies,” p. 5-7, see also Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Stephenson, “Edwardian Art and its Legacies”, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid,

<sup>20</sup> See also: A., Helmrich, “Dynamic Networks of Circulation and Exchange in Edwardian Art, *Visual Culture in Britain*,” Vol.14, no. 1, March 2013, pp. 36-54.

## Cultures of Tourism

The identification of Bell and Grant's appropriation and opposition to convention through photography incorporating physical and psychological movement and the creation of a new way of picturing themselves, their circle of friends and family and the surrounding landscape at home and abroad makes plain their participation in wider preoccupations in the Edwardian period associated with developing cultures of tourism and ideas about movement and modernity.

A strand of the debate around cultures of tourism that holds particular relevance to discussions about the interrelationships between art, photography and travel within this thesis is the argument put forward by John Urry and Jonas Larsen regarding the primacy of the "gaze." Like Bourdieu's "pure gaze" of the dominant culture which informs the development of the aesthetic disposition and a sense of taste and distinction the "tourist gaze" is a "filter of ideas, skills desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education...a performance that orders, shapes and classifies, rather than reflects."<sup>21</sup> In addition, according to Urry and Larsen the gaze "...orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are relevant differences and what are 'other.'"<sup>22</sup> All these elements are explored in Chapter One of this thesis which details Bell and Grant and their family's engagement with cultures of tourism through written correspondence and the production and consumption of photographic images.

Where Bell, Grant and the Bloomsbury Group diverge from definitions of tourism is in the understood relation between tourism and work. Urry and Larsen suggest that tourism is:

"a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organized work. It is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organized as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in 'modern' societies. Indeed, acting as a tourist is one of the defining characteristics of being 'modern' and is bound up with major transformations in paid work."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> J. Urry and J. Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2011), p. 2

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 4

This thesis argues that in fact, travel, and aspects of tourism bound up in that experience were for Bell, Grant and other members of the Bloomsbury Group more often than not associated with their work as individual artists, writers and members of collaborative partnerships like the Omega Workshops. This element of their travel/work dynamic is also detailed in Chapter One.

James Buzard's theories regarding travel writing elaborate on arguments put forward in Chapter One about the content of meaning of 'verbal sketches' in letters, essays and published texts by Bell, members of her family and the Bloomsbury Group and how they related to concepts of travelling. Buzard argues that when "The class-specific ideals of the grand tour were refunctioned to suit that atmosphere in which 'everybody' seemed to be abroad: the desiderata of travelling turned inward and created the honorific sense of 'traveller,' which means 'the one who is not a *tourist*.'" <sup>24</sup> He suggests further that "...modern travellers and travel writers identified themselves as anti-touristic beings whose unhappy lot it was to move amidst and in the wake of tourists...on the increasingly beaten path of Continental travelling..." <sup>25</sup> Buzard's definition of "differing motifs of authenticity" or "ways of seeing" Europe in the nineteenth century (stillness, saturation, the dreamlike, and the picturesque) are also clearly at play in the letters and images analysed in Chapter One. <sup>26</sup> Again where Bell and Grant and members of the Bloomsbury differ from their touring predecessors and contemporaries is in their view of the connection between past and present art, culture and history as "describing a continuum of experience between them rather than submitting the former to alienation by reifying the latter." <sup>27</sup>

### **Motion and Modernity**

Another theory discussed by John Urry and Chris Rojek related to cultures of tourism which takes into account issues of movement and modernity and therefore applicable to arguments in this thesis is the concept of two types of modernism: Modernity 1 [which]

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<sup>24</sup> J. Buzard 'The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840) ,*The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Young, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), P. 49

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 49, See also:

<sup>26</sup> J. Buzard, 'A Continent of Pictures: Reflections on the "Europe of Nineteenth- Century Tourists"' *PMLA – Modern Language Association*, Vol. 108, No. 1 (Jan., 1993), pp. 30-44, p. 33

<sup>27</sup> J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 330

set[s] down certain rules to live by and attempted to install a universal, binding ‘order of things’, and Modernity 2 which “[seeks] to express the ‘disorderliness’ of life.”<sup>28</sup> The sense of dynamism suggested in the characterisation of Modernity 2 is also present in Tim Cresswell’s understanding of movement and mobility: “We can think of movement, then, as the dynamic equivalent of location in abstract space....mobility is the dynamic equivalent of place.”<sup>29</sup> Cresswell provides a flexible definition of mobility as “a socially produced motion...understood through three relational moments: firstly, “something potentially observable, an empirical fact”... secondly, “ideas about mobility that are conveyed through an array of representational strategies” (such as photography and literature), and thirdly conceiving mobility as something that “is practiced, experienced, it is embodied” (for example to be happy or in love).<sup>30</sup> Cresswell’s definition directly informs the argument developed throughout this thesis of the movement of the photographic image operating in both a physical and psychological sense.<sup>31</sup>

In her work on Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), Rebecca Solnit draws attention to the effect of new technologies on his photographic practice (the railway, advances in photographic equipment, the telegraph).<sup>32</sup> She suggests that “his persistent passion for the mutable, the fleeting, the unstable” did not result in the stillness that was the goal of earlier photographic practitioners but rather, “a world of processes again, for one picture showed a horse, but six pictures showed a act, a motion a event... a fundamental change in the nature of photography and what could be represented.”<sup>33</sup> Chapter Four of this thesis focuses on the visual expression of monumentality and movement in the photography of Vanessa Bell and her Great-Aunt Julia Margaret Cameron and argues that similar to Muybridge Bell’s primary interest as a photographer was to show the world around her on the move.

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<sup>28</sup> C. Rojek and J. Urry, “Transformations of Travel and Theory,” *Touring Cultures – Transformations of Travel and Theory*, ed. Chris Rojek and John Urry, (London Routledge, 1997), p. 3

<sup>29</sup> T. Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 3

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>32</sup> R. Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and Technological Wild West*, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 9, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

## Situating Bell and Grant's Practice in the Wider Context of Modernism in Britain and Europe

Issues of movement and modernity were approached in a variety of way by individual artists and artist groups in the early decades of the twentieth century both in Britain and Europe. In France, Cubist artists like Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque were in part influenced by developments in ways of travelling and communication from the cinema to the automobile and airplane, and sought to replicate the multiplicity of visual perceptions these new technologies offered in painted and constructed form.<sup>34</sup> Similarly *simultaneism* or movements expressed by simultaneous colour contrasts, as demonstrated in the work of Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), spoke to the rhythms of modern art, literature and poetry.<sup>35</sup> In Italy, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, advocated through Futurism, a celebration of the modernity of the industrialised city predicated on “attacking the artistic weight of the past, advocating the destruction of academies, museums, and monumental cities as barriers to progress...” while German *Dadists* like Hannah Hoch engaged with the increasing popularity of photo journalism through combining cut and pasted photographic and typographic material in collage.<sup>36</sup> In Britain, Wyndham Lewis launched his magazine *Blast* and within the ‘Vorticist Manifesto’ in July 1914, both magazine and document calling for Britain to accept “the modern mechanized world in its art.”<sup>37</sup>

The forays of Bloomsbury artists into abstraction including cubism and collage have been well documented.<sup>38</sup> Their response to other movements in modern art is also detailed in letters and correspondence. It is notable that Roger Fry did not include any Italian Futurists in his Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1912 arguing according

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<sup>34</sup> F. Hartt, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Volume Two*, 4th Ed. (New York: Harry M Abrams Inc., 1993), P. 974

<sup>35</sup> M. A Cawes, *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000) p. 163

<sup>36</sup> Hartt, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Volume Two*, 4th Ed. (New York: Harry M Abrams Inc., 1993, P. 997

<sup>37</sup> F. Spalding., *British Art Since 1900*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p. 52

<sup>38</sup> See R. Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1999, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). Reed, Christopher, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004). Grace Brockington., “A Lavender Talent’ or ‘The Most Important Woman Painter in Europe’? Reassessing Vanessa Bell”, *Art History*, Volume 36, Issue 1 (January 2013), pp.128-145.

to Frances Spalding that “they had so far failed to produce a visual language capable of registering their interest in speed and movement.”<sup>39</sup> Equally Wyndham Lewis’s initiation of the Vorticist movement through the Rebel Arts Centre in the Spring of 1914, followed a disagreement with Roger Fry over a commission for the Omega Workshops for the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition, while another artist who worked for the Workshops, Frederick Etchells (who also worked with Duncan Grant and Roger Fry) later denounced the movement as “manufactured and fake.”<sup>40</sup> Of the two British artists Frances Spalding identifies as engaging with ‘simultaneity’ through depicting scenes of urban colour and movement, Vanessa Bell remarked of C.R.W. Nevinson and later Vorticist David Bomberg:

The Friday Club has a show on which seems to be meeting with universal praise. It seems to me utterly hopeless. Bomberg has two striking pieces Nevinson has several very clever pieces. There are a great many very bright enthusiastic, lively young painters, all making experiments, but it seemed to me that they were all simply trying to be up to date and that not one of them was trying to be an artist. Of course I may have been prejudiced by the fact that nearly every second picture is a biblical scene. The young are all reverting to Pre-Raphaelitism really with all the moral and literary part of it as strong as ever.<sup>41</sup>

Though the above quotations could be said to in some ways encapsulate Bell’s negative feelings towards fraction movements like the Vorticists, on the whole her letters betray her enthusiasm and appreciation of both new and established artists in the British and European modern art movement.

This thesis seeks to carve a space, and make a case for the significance of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and the Bloomsbury Group’s use of photography in their personal life and artistic practice while also demonstrating how this work fit into a broader developments modernist painting photographic image making. Chapter Two particularly deals with this point in discussing critical responses to the Bloomsbury Group in the media, the use of photography in advertising by group initiatives such as the Omega Workshops and the global reach of their work, through coverage in influential periodicals and other publications of the period.

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<sup>39</sup> Spalding., *British Art Since 1900*, p. 49

<sup>40</sup> See Q. Bell and S. Chaplin, “The Ideal Home Rumpus,” *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism*, (London: University of Toronto Press), pp. 335-351. Spalding., *British Art Since 1900*, p. 52

<sup>41</sup> V. Bell to D Grant, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1914, *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, (London: Moyer Bell), p. 156

Chapter Four in its discussion of monumentality and movement also shows that Vanessa Bell was engaging with both contrary strands of photographic practice in the modernist period, the re-emergence of Pictorialism in 1919 and the rise of documentary and reportage photography, which was the driving force in British photography between 1919 and 1939.<sup>42</sup> Characteristics of the action-realist style of the 1930s from taking low angle viewpoints picturing the free, active models in the middle ground behind other silhouetted, [and] out of focus foreground figures” to “the notion of seeing past, or rather with...[or being] introduced into the frame of action through a delegated spectator” are all present in Bell’s photography which captures movement in this period, though conversely she indicated that photo reportage magazines such as *Picture Post*, were despised of by some members of the household at Charleston as “...rags [of]...low taste...”<sup>43</sup>

This thesis seeks to identify processes of exchange within and between generations of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant’s familial and friendship circles. The central element of exchange examined here is how the conceptual links between art, photography and travel both mentally and physically impacted Bell and Grant and earlier generations of their families. This introduction in its discussion of broader theoretical concepts and topics such as periodization, networks of dissemination and exchange, identity construction and patterns and class and taste, cultures of tourism and the situating of Bell, Grant and the Bloomsbury within the wider context of artistic and photographic movements of the modernist period identifies contextual issues that inform the main arguments and close image analysis of images within this thesis. Both methodological approach and image analysis support the primary objective of this thesis which is to further underline the significance, previously under recognised of the photographic image in understanding the personality and practice of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and the Bloomsbury Group.

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<sup>42</sup> D. Mellor., *Modern British Photography 1919-1939*, (London: Arts Council, 1980), p. 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 30. And V. Bell to J. Bussy, 10 April 1945, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 493

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The links between the photographic image, travel and modernity in the Victorian and Edwardian period has been widely discussed. In her seminal text *On Photography* published in 1979, Susan Sontag suggested that tourism and photography developed in tandem.<sup>44</sup> The interplay between the public and private sphere and between convention and unfamiliarity has been explored by Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative* published in 2003 and Peter Osborne's work *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture* published in 2000.<sup>45</sup> The growth of travel literature in the form of letters and memoirs is a focus of Marjorie Morgan's 2001 study *National Identities and Travel in Victorian England* and Paul Fussell's work *Abroad* published in 1992.<sup>46</sup> The rise of the guidebook is charted by Jan Palmowski in a chapter entitled 'Travels with Baedeker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain' included in the 2002 edited volume *Histories of Leisure*.<sup>47</sup> Maria H. Frawley's chapter 'Borders and Boundaries, Perspectives and Place: Victorian Travel Writing,' discusses the concept of place in the travel writing of women in the Victorian period, and this subject is the focus of Romita Ray's chapter 'A Dream of Beauty: Inscribing the English Garden in India'

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<sup>44</sup> S. Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1977). Sontag's second monograph on the subject of photography, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2004) focuses on the power of photographs picturing war and conflict.

<sup>45</sup> A. Noble and A. Hughes (eds.), *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003). Andrea Noble's main focus area is Latin American visual culture, she has also co-edited with J.J. Long and E. Welch, *Photography Theoretical Snapshots* (London: Routledge, 2008). Alex Hughes has written edited works of both fiction and non-fiction works with a concentration on French culture and sexual politics. See also A. Hughes, *France/China: Intercultural Imaginings* (Oxford: Legenda, 2007), P.D. Osborne, *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), Peter Osborne has also written extensively on contemporary and conceptual art, aesthetics critical theory and modernity including *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-garde* (London: Verso Books, 1995).

<sup>46</sup> M. Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) and P. Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) Morgan has also published *Manners, Morals and Class 1774-1858* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> J. Palmowski, 'Travels with Baedeker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain' in *Histories of Leisure* ed. by R. Kosher (Oxford: Berg, 2002). Palmowski's research interests are mostly centred on the history and politics of contemporary Germany, he has also published *A Dictionary of Contemporary World History: From 1900 to Present Day* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).



both of which are included the 2005 publication *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*.<sup>48</sup>

Julia Margaret Cameron, Vanessa Bell's Great Aunt, has been the subject of several biographies and exhibitions.<sup>49</sup> Many of the authoritative texts on Cameron, including *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work* written in 1948 by Helmut Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs* by Colin Ford, Julian Cox and Philippa Wright published in 2003, and Sylvia Wolf's 1998 book *Julia Margaret Cameron's Women*, are focused studies on her photographs and do not discuss the central importance of travel for Cameron or the effect of travel on her photography.<sup>50</sup> Similarly Bell's father, Leslie Stephen, has been the subject of

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<sup>48</sup> M.H. Frawley, 'Borders and Boundaries, Perspectives and Place: Victorian travel writing' in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, ed. by J. Pomeroy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). Frawley has published a number of books about the Victorian period including *Invalidism and Identity in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004) and *A Wider Range: Travel-Writing by Women in Victorian England* (Madison New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994).

R. Ray, 'A Dream of Beauty: Inscribing the English Garden in India' in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, ed by J. Pomeroy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). Ray has written further on this subject in her 2013 monograph *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (London: Yale University Press, 2013).

On how women of the Victorian period collected and arranged photographs in albums and used them as a form of public and private communication see P. di Bello, *Women's Albums and Victorian Photography: Ladies Mothers and Flirts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) and P. di Bello, 'The Female Collector: Women's Photographic Albums in the 19th Century', *Living Pictures*, Vol.1, No.2, 2001, pp.3-20.

<sup>49</sup> For Julia Margaret Cameron exhibitions and biographies see V&A website for a fuller list at <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/j/reading-list-julia-margaret-cameron/>. The most recent large-scale exhibition of Julia Margaret Cameron's work was at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, running from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2013 to the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2014.

<sup>50</sup> H. Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1948, rpt 1975), C. Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), S. Wolf, *Julia Margaret Cameron's Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), see also related works by H. Gernsheim and A. Gernsheim including *Lewis Carroll, Photographer*. (London: Max Parrish, 1949, (New York: Dover Publications, 1949, New York: Dover Publications, 1969), *Masterpieces of Victorian Photography* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1951), with A. Gernsheim and Q. Bell, *Those Impossible English* (London: G. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1952), with A. Gernsheim. *Roger Fenton, Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters From The Crimea* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), with A. Gernsheim, *The History of Photography from the Earliest Use of the Camera Obscura in the Eleventh Century up to 1914* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), with A. Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre: The History of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956. Rev. eds.: New York: Dover Publications, 1968 & 1969), *Creative Photography: Aesthetic Trends, 1839-1960* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962, New York: Bonanza Books, 1962, New York: Dover Publications, 1991), with A. Gernsheim. *Creative Photography 1826 to the Present: An Exhibition from The Gernsheim Collection* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), with A. Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1965, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965. Oslo : J. W. Cappelens, 1966. London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.

biographies; his letters have been published and his private memoirs known as *The Mausoleum Book* are also in the public domain. These accounts of Stephen's life all make references to places he travelled to and his attitudes towards travelling and tourism but they have not been examined in relation to photographic images which capture these journeys.<sup>51</sup> A selection of writings by Bell's mother, Julia Princep Stephen was published in 1993 in a collection edited by Diane F. Gillespie and Elizabeth Steele and she has been referenced in relation to Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs of her, but an account of her attitudes towards being photographed or her experiences of travelling has not been written.<sup>52</sup> Duncan Grant's family has to date not been the subject of a specific biography although Frances Spalding's 1997 monograph *Duncan Grant: A Biography* provides some biographical details of previous generations of Grant's family.<sup>53</sup> Grant's great-aunt Elizabeth Grant wrote a private memoir which was later edited and published in 1898 as *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*.<sup>54</sup> Photographs in The Charleston Trust collection with Grant family provenance have not been examined in relation to the interconnections between travel and the photographic image within earlier generations of Duncan Grant's family.

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant have been the focus of a number of studies. Comprehensive biographies have been written by Frances Spalding on Bell in 1983 and

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Vienna: Fritz Molden, 1971, Lucerne, Switzerland: C. J. Bucher, 1975), with A. Gernsheim, *The History of Photography from the Camera Obscura to the Beginning of the Modern Era*, 2nd rev & enl'd ed (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), *The Origins of Photography* (Milan: Electa, 1981, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982), *Incunabula of British Photographic Literature: A Bibliography of British Photographic Literature, 1839-75* (London, Berkeley: Scolar Press in association with Derbyshire College of Higher Education, 1984), *A Concise History of Photography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), *The Rise of Photography 1850-1880*, *The Age of Collodion* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1988).

<sup>51</sup> F.W. Maitland, (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London: Duckworth and Co, 1906), J. Bicknell (ed.), *Selected Letters of Leslie Stephen Volume 1 1864-1882 and Volume 2 1882-1904* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1996), L. Stephen, *Sir Leslie Stephen's Mausoleum Book*, intro by A. Bell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

<sup>52</sup> D.F. Gillespie and E. Steele (eds.), *Julia Duckworth Stephen: Stories for Children, Essays for Adults*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

<sup>53</sup> F. Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997, London: Pimlico, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> E. Grant, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* (Canongate Books Ltd, 2006). Grant's Aunt's family, the Strachey's, has been profiled in B. Caine, *Bombay to Bloomsbury: A Biography of the Strachey Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Duncan Grant wrote an unpublished biographical manuscript for friends called 'The Paris Memoir,' about his time as an art student in the city (Tate Gallery Archives, TGA 8010/9/3).

Grant in 1997.<sup>55</sup> Key texts relating to Bell and Grant's artistic development, individually, together and in collaboration with artist formations like The Omega Workshops include works by Richard Shone, namely *Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell Duncan Grant and Their Circle*, and *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant*, published in 1976 and 1999 respectively.<sup>56</sup> Two works by Simon Watney, *English Post-Impressionism* published in 1980 and *The Art of Duncan Grant* published in 1990 offered appraisals of Bell and Grant as individual artists as does Gillian Naylor's 1990 publication *Bloomsbury: The Artists, Authors and Designers by Themselves*.<sup>57</sup> The workings of the Omega Workshops are covered in detail in *The Omega Workshops* by Judith Collins published in 1984 and Isabelle Ascombe's *Omega and After: Bloomsbury and the Decorative Arts* published in 1985. Judith Collin's book in particular traces the use of photographs by the Workshops for press and publicity purposes and provides a complete collection of these images. It does not, however, relate these photographs to Bell and Grant's wider photographic practice. Christopher Reed's 2004 book *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* provides an analysis of interior spaces created by Bell, Grant, Roger Fry and other artists associated with Bloomsbury suggesting that these domestic interior schemes offered an alternative form of modernism.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Key biographical sources include Frances Spalding's individual biographies of Bell and Grant: F. Spalding, *Vanessa Bell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983, Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2006) and *Duncan Grant: A Biography*. Further texts by Spalding related to the artists of the Bloomsbury Group include *Roger Fry: Art and Life* (Norwich: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), *The Bloomsbury Group: National Portrait Gallery Insights* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2005), *British Art Since 1900* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, rpt, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> R. Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1999, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), R. Shone, *Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Their Circle* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976, London: Phaidon, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> S. Watney, *English Post Impressionism* (London: Studio Vista, 1980), S. Watney, *The Art of Duncan Grant* (London: John Murray, 1990), G. Naylor (ed.), *Bloomsbury: The Artists, Authors and Designers by Themselves* (London: Pyramid Books, 1990).

<sup>58</sup> C. Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004). Other works by Reed related to Bloomsbury include an edited volume of Roger Fry's writings, *A Roger Fry Reader* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), C. Reed and N.E. Green, *A Room of Their Own: The Bloomsbury Artists in American Collections* (Ithaca: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 2008), and C. Reed, "'A Room of One's Own': The Bloomsbury Group's Creation of a Modernist Domesticity," in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed by C. Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996).

The works I mention here, as well as the bulk of written material on Bell and Grant, make use of contemporary photographs for illustration purposes but the use and meaning of photography for Bell and Grant in a personal and professional sense is not discussed in detail.<sup>59</sup> Some catalogues for significant exhibitions of work by Bell and Grant individually and as members of the Omega Workshops and other exhibition societies include photographs but these are briefly referred to in introductory essays focusing on the art historical and social implications of Bell and Grant's paintings and designs rather than the photographs themselves.

Though photography was clearly an essential part of Vanessa Bell's public and private identity it is Virginia Woolf's interactions with the camera that are most often discussed. Useful articles related to Woolf's photography include 'Virginia Woolf and the Problematic Nature of the Photographic Image' by Helen Wussow published in the periodical *Twentieth Century Literature* in 2004, and Diane F. Gillespie's chapter entitled 'Her Kodak Pointed at His Head': Virginia Woolf and Photography' in the 1993 publication *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*.<sup>60</sup> Maggie Humm's 2002 book *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* and *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* written in 2006 focus on how Vanessa Bell formulated her private family albums in relation to her sister Virginia Woolf, and how this marginalised amateur photography can be regarded as a feminist intervention into modernist culture.<sup>61</sup> Humm's 2011 article 'The Stephen Sisters as Young Photographers' focuses on the

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<sup>59</sup> Christopher Reed does discuss Bell and Grant's use of the photographic image in detail in relation to two works, Bell's *Still Life of Flowers in a Jug*, 1948-50, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Collection of Bannon and Barnabas McHenry, and Grant's c.1972 painting, *Still Life with Photograph of Nijinsky*, oil on canvas, 51 x 40.8 cm, Private Collection.

<sup>60</sup> H. Wussow, 'Virginia Woolf and the Problematic Nature of the Photographic Image', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1994, pp. 1-14, and D.F. Gillespie "'Her Kodak Pointed at His Head': Virginia Woolf and Photography', in *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf* ed by D.F. Gillespie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), pp. 113-147. Gillespie discussed Woolf's photography further in a chapter entitled "'Travesties of Excellence": Julia Margaret Cameron, Lytton Strachey and Virginia Woolf and the Photographic Image', in *Virginia Woolf and the Arts* ed by D.F. Gillespie and L.K. Hankins (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), pp.48-56, and has also written on the relationship between Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell in their differing chosen occupations in *The Sister's Arts: The Writings and Paintings of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

<sup>61</sup> M. Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* and M. Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

development of Bell and Woolf's photographic practice primarily in the context of compiling family photograph albums and creating photographic portraits.<sup>62</sup>

Other publications on the subject of Vanessa Bell's private photography include *Vanessa Bell's Family Album* by her son and daughter Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett, the first monograph to concentrate on Vanessa Bell's private photographic output.<sup>63</sup> The book offers a selection of images from the albums which Vanessa Bell compiled throughout her life with each image captioned with brief biographical and contextual detail. An assessment of Bell's engagement with other types of photography, her own and by others, which she kept and used is not made. Snapshot photography was also the focus of Val Williams' chapter 'Carefully Creating an Idyll: Vanessa Bell and Snapshot Photography 1907-46.' included in *Family Snapshots: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* edited by Jo Spence and Patricia Holland.<sup>64</sup>

There has been very little written to date on how important the concept of travel was for Bell in terms of how it influenced the way she took pictures and consequently the way she painted and designed. Two works that do discuss Bell's attitude towards travel and include related photographs are *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends* by Mary Ann Caws and Sarah Bird Wright published in 1999 and Marion Dell and Marion Whybrow's 2003 book *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: Remembering St Ives*.<sup>65</sup> Lisa

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<sup>62</sup> M. Humm, 'The Stephen Sisters as Young Photographers', *Canvas*, Issue 15, The Charleston Trust, <http://www.charleston.org.uk/the-stephen-sisters-as-young-photographers/> (13 January 2011). Humm has also written for more general audiences on Virginia Woolf's interest in photography: M. Humm, 'The Story Behind the Pictures,' *The Guardian*, 15 November 2003. See also, M. Humm, *Virginia Woolf, Photography and Modernism* (South Port: Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Q. Bell, and A. Garnett (eds.), *Vanessa Bell's Family Album*.

<sup>64</sup> V. Williams, 'Carefully Creating an Idyll: Vanessa Bell and Snapshot Photography 1907-1946' in *Family Snapshots: The Meaning of Domestic Photography*, ed. by J. Spence and P. Holland, (London Virago, 1991). Williams has published extensively on many areas of photography, from surveys of particular periods or locations to a focus on women photographers. See V. Williams, *Warworks: Women, Photography and the Iconography of War* (London: Virago Press, 1995) and V. Williams, *Women Photographers: Women Photographers in Britain – 1900 to Present* (London: Virago Press, 1986). William's essay 'Carefully Creating the Idyll' is also included in this collection.

<sup>65</sup> M.A. Caws and S. Bird Wright, *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000). See also M.A. Caws, *Women of Bloomsbury: Virginia, Vanessa and Carrington* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). Sarah Bird Wright's other publications also focus on travel and include *Edith Wharton's Travel Writing: The Making on a Connoisseur* (London: Palgrave Macmillan; 1997) and *Edith Wharton Abroad: Selected Travel Writing 1888-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).

M. Dell and M. Whybrow, *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: Remembering St Ives* (Padstow: Tabb House Originals, 2003). Marion Dell's work has focused particularly on the Stephen family, see 'Versions of

Tickner's article 'Vanessa Bell, *Studland Beach*, Domesticity, and "Significant Form,"' discusses the role of photography in the development of Bell's 1912 painting *Studland Beach*.<sup>66</sup> All three of these works provide location specific assessments of the meaning of travel for Bell and are accompanied by a selection of photographs but they do not discuss the overriding relationship between travel and photographic images for Bell, Grant and Bloomsbury.<sup>67</sup> Bell's correspondence and published writings make clear the importance of travel in her and Grant's public and private lives.<sup>68</sup>

Photography has also received little attention in relation to the work of Duncan Grant. *Duncan Grant* by Simon Watney and Richard Shone's *Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and their Circle* offer a wealth of images and provide some assessment of specific works by Grant that were inspired by photography.<sup>69</sup> Similarly Douglas B. Turnbaugh's biography *Duncan Grant and the Bloomsbury Group* published in 1987 includes photographs that have not been seen in other texts from the collection of Paul Roche, Grant's companion in later life.<sup>70</sup> However, these photographs are not discussed in detail or related to Grant's wider artistic practice. Grant's attitude towards travelling has not been explored in detail, though his experiences of travelling in later life were chronicled by Paul Roche in his 1982 publication *With Duncan Grant in Turkey*.<sup>71</sup>

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Julia' – *The Virginia Woolf Bulletin- Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain*, Issue 21, January 2006, p.56, and 'Talland House', *Woolf Online*, [n.d.] [http://www.woolfonline.com/timepasses/?q=essays/talland\\_house](http://www.woolfonline.com/timepasses/?q=essays/talland_house) [accessed 29, June 2013].

<sup>66</sup> L. Tickner, 'Vanessa Bell, *Studland Beach*, Domesticity, and "Significant Form"', *Representations*, No. 65, Special Issue: New Perspectives in British Studies, 1999, pp. 63-92. See also, L. Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> Vanessa Curtis has explored Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf's early holiday making experiences between 1882 and 1908 within the UK in *The Hidden Houses of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 2005). Vanessa Curtis has also written on Virginia Woolf's relationships with significant women in her life, including her mother, Julia Prinsep Stephen and her sister Vanessa Bell. See also V. Curtis, *Virginia Woolf's Women* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> V. Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, ed. by L. Giachero (London: The Hogarth Press and Chatto and Windus Ltd, 1997) and Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*.

<sup>69</sup> See bibliographic information for works by Richard Shone and Simon Watney.

<sup>70</sup> D.B. Turnbaugh, *Duncan Grant and the Bloomsbury Group* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, 1987), See also D.B. Turnbaugh, *Private: The Erotic Art of Duncan Grant 1888-1978* (London: The Gay Men's Press, 1989).

<sup>71</sup> P. Roche, *With Duncan Grant in Turkey* (London: Honeyglen Publishing, 1982).

There has been no examination of how younger figures in the Bloomsbury Group, particularly Bell's own children, engaged with concepts of travel, art and photography.<sup>72</sup> Two works that deal with Julian Bell's experiences in China include Patricia Laurence's 2013 volume *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China* and Peter Stansky and William Abraham's biography of Julian Bell *From Bloomsbury to Spanish Civil War* published in 2012.<sup>73</sup>

This thesis therefore breaks new ground regarding the working methods of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant and their use of collected photographic images. It also traces their public role as working artists while examining the interior or private impact of travel and photography on the artists and their work. In addition it compares their thoughts about and use of photographic images with those of previous generations in their families who travelled the world extensively, as well as the role that Bell and Grant's ideas about the way art photography and travel intertwined influenced the following generation. By bringing together these different generational strands in a way that has not previously been done and considering a collection of photographs recently donated to The Charleston Trust this thesis identifies the elements characterising 'the Bloomsbury photograph.' It also demonstrates that Bell and Grant's photography related endeavours can stand equally alongside their other work as an example of their engagement with modernism.

Chapter One explores the development of tourism and photography in the Victorian period and analyses intersections between art, photography and tourism in the collection of carte de visite and cabinet photographs recently donated to The Charleston Trust.

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<sup>72</sup> Angelica Garnett's memoirs, *Deceived with Kindness* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1984), *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story* (Maine: Puckerbrush Press, 1998), and fictionalised account, *The Unspoken Truth* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2010) frequently mention occasions where a camera was present and her mother's interest in taking photographs. Quentin Bell has written extensively on the Bloomsbury Circle including: Q. Bell, *Elders and Betters* (London: John Murray, 1995), *Virginia Woolf: A Biography: 1882-1912*, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography: 1919-1941* (London: Hogarth Press, 1972), *Bloomsbury* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), and Q. Bell et al., *Charleston: Past and Present* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), *Charleston: A Bloomsbury House and Garden*, (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 1997).

<sup>73</sup> P.O. Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003). See also P.O. Laurence, *Virginia Woolf and the East* (London: Cecil Woolf Publishers, 1995), P. Stansky and W. Abrahams, *Julian Bell: From Bloomsbury to Spanish Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), P. Stansky, *On or About December 1910: Early Bloomsbury and its Intimate World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

These images are then related to Charleston's existing collection of Victorian photographs and related travel images of Leslie and Julia Stephen in the Alpine landscape, Vanessa Bell's documentation of her early travel experiences (not previously examined in detail) and a series of photographs collected by Duncan Grant's parents of colonial India. These visual experiences are then compared and contrasted to the conventions of the verbal sketch in Leslie Stephen, Julia Margaret Cameron and Vanessa Bell's personal correspondence.

Chapter Two explores Bell and Grant's formation of an archive of photographic reproductions from museums, galleries and magazines and how they were used in the public arena, both in exhibitions of their own work and in the work of their contemporaries. It also examines how contemporary media used the photograph in assessments of Bell and Grant's artistic endeavours. A contextual section on how Julia Margaret Cameron involved photographic reproductions in her photographic process and exhibitions and how contemporary critics responded to her work is included here as well as an examination of Clive Bell's use of photographic reproductions for research and publication.

Chapter Three analyses photographs made for the purposes of private exchanges of both a physical and psychological nature. This section looks at the nature of private exchange among Julia Margaret Cameron's circle and Bloomsbury and examines images ranging from Cameron's pictures of workers on family estates in Ceylon, messages written on carte de visite photographs and postcards, and paintings by Bell and Grant that were either directly or indirectly inspired by personal and private photographs in their possession.

Chapter Four examines the concepts of monumentality, movement and modernism inherent in photographs taken and used by Cameron, Bell and Grant and discusses the visual expression of these ideas in the form of photographs and paintings with a clear interest in proving family ties and connections to past artistic and photographic traditions, including picturing the artist in the studio and at work. The culmination of this discussion identifies defining features of the Bloomsbury photograph as created by Vanessa Bell and how it incorporates movement, the primary element of Bell's photographic aesthetic. Bell's documented interest in capturing movement in a variety



of ways in her photography is identified as being a new way by which she and Grant engaged with and pushed the boundaries of English modernism.

## CHAPTER ONE: PUBLIC IMAGES - INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN THE TRAVEL, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHIC INDUSTRIES IN THE VICTORIAN PERIOD

The advent of photography changed forever the way in which we view ourselves and the world around us. It was an image of place that came to us originally with Joseph Nicéphore Niépce's (1765-1833) first successful photographic image of the courtyard of his home in 1826.<sup>74</sup> His view from the window of his estate Le Gras took approximately eight hours to expose and the result is an indistinct grainy image. Efforts by Niépce's collaborator Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre (1807-1851) resulted in the first photographic portrait of a person.<sup>75</sup> This image and process, first unveiled publically to the French Academy in 1839, was intended to depict a busy Paris boulevard. The wide boulevard and trees are quite clear but the street seems deserted apart from the small figure of a man having his shoes shined. Due to the long exposure time of ten to fifteen minutes moving objects did not register in the photograph.<sup>76</sup> Further developments in this early period of photography, from William Henry Fox Talbot's *calotypes* which were printed on paper and allowed the production of negatives to Frederick Scott Archer's *wet-plate* process of 1851 which sped up both the exposure time and creation of negatives, insured that photography would become a popular and readily available method of picturing a fast-paced modern world.<sup>77</sup>

By the 1860s families, including those of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, began to arrange images of their private selves for wider consumption in carte de visite albums and larger scale 'cabinet' photographs.<sup>78</sup> Here was a new way of telling one's story, of visually describing how people looked, where they went and what they did. It is because of this perceived all-encompassing function that photography became so strongly linked

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<sup>74</sup> Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras* or *Landscape-Saint-Loup-de-Varennes*, 1826-27, positive-negative bitumen heliography, unetched, 16.2 cm x 20.2 cm, Collection of Helmut Gernsheim Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, Austin Texas, F. Hartt, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Volume Two*, 4th Ed. (New York: Harry M Abrams Inc., 1993), p.904.

<sup>75</sup> Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre, *Boulevard du Temple*, 3. Arrondissement, 1837-38, daguerreotype (original destroyed) Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich.

<sup>76</sup> Hartt, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Volume Two*, pp.904-905.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Hughes and Noble, *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, p. 242.

with travel. In many ways the expansion of travel among all classes, but particularly the upper middle classes, exemplifies the acceleration of the pace of life, development and change that has come to characterise our understanding of the Victorian period. Increasing numbers of people travelling during this period is indicative of these changes: between the 1830s and 1913 the number of people going to the Continent rose from about 50,000 people a year to 660,000 people a year.<sup>79</sup> Susan Sontag notes the development of a link between photography and tourism at this time and identifies the elements of appropriation and opposition within that relationship stating:

Thus, photography develops in tandem with one of the most characteristic of modern activities: tourism....Photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made...a way of certifying experience but also a way of refusing it – by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic...Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs.<sup>80</sup>

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant kept a great deal of photographic material from previous generations. The archive of images at Charleston, their home from 1916 to Grant's death in 1978, contains many family photographs which are being discussed for the first time in this chapter.<sup>81</sup> The images range widely in type and content, from carte de visite and cabinet sized portraits to views of India printed on delicate paper scrolls. All the images make reference to concepts of travel, art and identity and establish patterns in ways of seeing the world and creating and maintaining personal and professional connections across it. These patterns can be seen to reverberate throughout the life and work of Bell and Grant, demonstrating both their appropriation of and opposition to the preceding generation's attitudes, actions and photographic technique. Through these photographs this section examines the inter-relationships and intersections between art, photography, travel and identity construction in the Victorian period. By focusing on a series of images kept within the families of Bell and Grant and then by Bell and Grant themselves, and particularly on those photographs that reference the act of physically and conceptually travelling, we can understand the contextual foundations of the artists' use of photography in their personal lives and professional work.

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<sup>79</sup> Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> The majority of the images from the Charleston Collection discussed in this section form part of a collection of photographs gifted to the Charleston Trust by Anne Olivier Bell in 2006 and 2007.

## Victorian Photographic Studios

The widespread locations of photography studios listed on the back of the cartes de visite and cabinet photographs in the Charleston Collection clearly demonstrate that the Stephen and Grant families and their friends were immensely well-travelled during the Victorian period. Visits were made to photographers across the United Kingdom from Brighton to Edinburgh and Ramsgate to Bath, as well as internationally, telling of journeys or relocations to Rome, Adelaide, Bremen, Stockholm, France, India, Canada, Berlin and New York among others.

The reverse of these photographs demonstrate how photographers were keen to make clear the interrelationship between art, photography and travel in this space. The back of the carte de visite and cabinet photograph was used to advertise the photographer's studio and listed the address or multiple addresses for the studio and the services provided. This space has received little attention regarding its artistic function and meaning but close examination reveals the clear intersections between art, photography and travel apparent on the reverse of many Victorian photographs..

Surveying the reverse of carte de visite and cabinet photographs in the Charleston Collection reveals great variety in decoration and design. Some studios presented their information simply and without grand illustration. This choice is exemplified by Grillet and Cie. of Naples (Figure 3), C. Boon & Son of Cape Colony (Figure 4) and The Adelaide Photographic Company (Figure 5). Other studios, such as W.A. Eurenus and P.L. Quist of Stockholm (Figure 6), Notman and Campbell of Boston (Figure 7), and W. Hoffert of Berlin (Figure 8), suggest their prestige by listing the prizes they have been awarded in photography competitions around the world or their affiliation with members of the Royal Family. The photographic studio of A. Brothers rather humorously trumpets the fact that they were given "The only award for portraits from Lancashire" via an honourable mention at the 1862 International Exhibition (Figure 9).

Exoticism is present in some United Kingdom studio advertising, exemplified by Hellis and Sons which had six studio locations in London and was notable for being "Photographers' to King Akbaloddowla Ex King of Oude"<sup>82</sup> This exotic

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<sup>82</sup> The King of Oude was in exile, living in London, a popular figure in high society his activities frequently reported in the press and his entourage described.

patronage is further mirrored by the elaborate design of the carte itself. Similarly, Alfred Cox and Company suggests a flavour of the orient in advertising their photographic services (Figure 11). By providing eye-catching front and reverse photographic images, most studios aimed to capture the trade of travellers and tourists seeking to picture themselves both at home and abroad.

That photographic studios marketed their services with ever increasing flair is evidenced on the reverse of the carte de visite and cabinet photographic images within the Charleston Collection produced by three different studios. A comparison of the back of three carte de visites from the studio of Oscar Gustave Rejlander (active 1853-1875) shows that experiments in font, provision of information and decoration were taking place fairly often. The first image has the photographer's name and address handwritten on the reverse (Figure 12). A later example shows a slightly more developed design with the photographer's name and address printed on both the front and reverse of the carte de visite, both in typeset and font (Figure 13). A third example from Rejlander reveals a far more elaborate font and includes "opposite the Victoria Station" in the description. This emphasizes the centrality of the studio and possibly its aim to catch the passing trade of tourists and travellers using the station to reach their destinations (Figure 14). Similar stylistic concerns are evident in examples from the Tunbridge Well's based photographer George Glanville (active 1870s-1902).<sup>83</sup> The reverse of the earliest example from Glanville's studio provides only locational text. The second shows only slight decoration to the lettering while the third and fourth examples indicate increased decoration and additional colouring and the last, royal approval in the coat of arms of Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Louise and her husband John the Marquis of Lorne (Figures 15-18). Two examples from Eton photographers Hills and Saunders (active 1852-present) also show that changes occurred in company design and insignia over time (Figures 19-20).<sup>84</sup>

Photographic studios in the Victorian period increasingly emphasised the interrelationship between photography and art by the way they titled themselves and described the types of service offered. Of the one hundred and ninety one carte de visite

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<sup>83</sup> 1881 *Tunbridge Wells, Kent Census*, 1, November, 2005, <http://theweald.mobi/c.asp?MemoId=C4TW13&HNo=0008> [accessed 15 July 2012].

<sup>84</sup> M. Killion, 'Picture This: The Hills and Saunders Photographic Collection', *Genealogists' Magazine*, Vol. 28, No.11, 2006, pp. 499-501.

and cabinet photographs donated to The Charleston Trust in 2006 very few studios give their title as “photographer.” G. Glanville titles himself “Photographic Artist” (Figure 17), Robert Faulker and Co is an “Artist and Photographer” (Figure 21), M. Medrington produces images “Photographed by J. Benson, Artist,” (Figure 22) and Alfred Cox and Company are “Photographers and Miniature Landscape Painters” (Figure 11).

Interestingly, W. Trevorrow who lists himself as “Portrait Group & Landscape Photographer” includes a delicate drawing on the reverse of the cabinet photograph that almost exactly replicates one by the studio of Alfred Cox. This suggests that photographic studios of the period were using the same or similar templates while often employing variations in titling (Figure 23). These two examples highlight another intersection between art and photography during the period in the role of commercial printers who in many cases used stock lithographic transfers to produce the imagery accompanying a photographic studio’s listings.<sup>85</sup> The portrait from Trevorrow’s St. Ives studio, picturing members of the Duckworth-Stephen family, Arthur Hart and a Mr. Wolstoneholme, was taken during the annual family holiday to St Ives. This image suggests one of the primary roles of commercial photographers in popular holiday destinations was to capture the landscape and people at moments of leisure. Trevorrow’s offering of photographic portraits and views of the picturesque environs of St Ives would have made his work doubly appealing to the passing tourist. A second image from Trevorrow’s studio reinforces the link between art and photography by means of another detailed line drawing on the reverse (Figure 24).

All three of these artist/photographers used decoration in this way to advertise their skills in the newer and older arts. This interest is further suggested by the descriptions of the photographers’ services. Among the artistic possibilities available to customers of Robert Faulkner and Co are “finishes in oil, water colours, crayons, or imperishable beautiful enamel” (Figure 21). Geo. Glanville can “offer enlargements which can be finished in oil or water by Artists of emmence [sic]” (Figure 17), Milsom St. Photographers Gallery indicates “a valuable painting produced on paper or canvas copies obtained at any time,” (Figure 22), while Hellis and Sons of London promises “This or any other portrait enlarged to life size and artistically painted in oil or water

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<sup>85</sup> G. Hudson, *The Riddle of the Carte-de-Visite*, The Ephemera Society (2003), <http://www.ephemera-society.org.uk/articles/articles.html> [accessed 26 September 2012].

Colours” (Figure 10). The number of images in the Charleston Collection offering these services indicates the practice of reproducing photographs in a painted form was common among photographic studios of the time. Though both English photographers, including Plumtree Photographer of Ramsgate, The Cantuar Photographic Company of Kent, J Munro of Frome, T Fall of London, and The London Stereoscopic Company, and international studios such as Galassi Francesco e Figlio of Imola offered additional ‘artistic’ services to their customers, surveying the collection of carte de visite and cabinet photographs in the Charleston Collection it appears that this was more common practice among English photographers, international studios instead preferring to highlight that negatives would be available for re-order or reproduction in life-size if requested (Figures 25 and 6).

Taken together, the carte de visite and cabinet images in the Charleston Collection offer important insights into how photographic studios appropriated fine art techniques and mediums in order to appeal to consumers suggesting that painting and drawing were still an integral part of image production in the photographic studios of the Victorian period. It is notable that the photographer Oscar Gustave Rejlander who is represented by numerous carte de visite photographs in the Charleston Collection began his career as a painter.<sup>86</sup> Rejlander then became a photographer to make studies for other artists believing the new medium improved an artist’s knowledge of anatomy and draftsmanship.<sup>87</sup> Of this Rejlander offered visual proof with his 1856 photograph entitled *Infant Photography Gives Painting an Additional Brush* (Figure 27).

Rejlander discussed his belief in the inter-relatedness of art and photography as shown in his photographic composition *Two Ways of Life* in a paper printed in the *Journal of the Photographic Society* in 1858. Explaining his reasons for producing the work, he stated that he “wished to show artists how useful photography might be made as an *aid* to their art, not only in details, but in preparing what may be regarded as a most perfect sketch of their composition; thereby enabling them to judge of effect, before proceeding

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<sup>86</sup> These images include portraits of Herbert Duckworth, Julia Stephen’s first husband, and portraits of the children of that marriage, Stella, George and Gerald.

<sup>87</sup> V. Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography* (London: Aurum Press, 2003), p.137.

to the elaboration of their finished work.”<sup>88</sup> Rejlander defined what he understood to be the collaborative relationship between art and photography: “I believe a time will come, and that not far distant, when *real art* and photography will go hand in hand, the latter as a means to the artistic end...photography ought to be used by painters and sculptors in particular, without having any lowering effect on their art; for Art is the study of life, and photography is like a brush full of paint...”<sup>89</sup>

This public declaration of the inter-relationship between art and photography in the works of Rejlander and other contemporary photographers in the listing of services on the reverse of carte de visite and cabinet sized images in the Victorian period suggests that they did not have any qualms regarding the appropriation of fine art methods of portraiture, genre and landscape painting.

### **Exchanges by the Families of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant with Aspects of the Art, Travel and Photographic Industries**

This section identifies how Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and their relations interacted with publically understood conventions about art, travel and photography, in some cases appropriating these conventions and at other times opposing them. These ‘public’ exchanges are discussed and compared with more intimate and private forms of exchange and circulation. While it has been suggested that the images and albums produced by the two generations, particularly in the case of the Stephen family, “preserve not only memories but also visual stories of each family member’s sense of its generational place” my aim here is to trace how these visual stories interact both positively and negatively, through appropriation and opposition. There is never a complete severing of ties as the relationship between Bloomsbury and its Victorian past is often portrayed.<sup>90</sup>

In many ways the experience of being photographed in the early decades of commercial photography was on one hand very unfamiliar and on the other rife with convention.

Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble note in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography*

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<sup>88</sup> O.G. Rejlander, ‘On Photographic Composition; with a Description of “Two Ways of Life”’, *Journal of the Photographic Society*, April 21, 1858, p. 191, reproduced in *The Photography of O.G. Rejlander*, ed by P.C. Bunnell (New York: Arno Press Inc., 1979).

<sup>89</sup> Rejlander, ‘On Photographic Composition’, pp.192-196

<sup>90</sup> Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, p. 13.



*and Narrative* that photographs in the Victorian period depicted individuals in the studio, a location which, with its “repeated props, mass-produced backgrounds, and formulaic poses...level[led] status and individuality.”<sup>91</sup> Similarly we can see images worked in both the public and private arenas as “private images of self and at the same time publicity for a whole social group.”<sup>92</sup> The interplay between the public and private nature of these images is further illuminated by an examination of the relationship between the photographic travel image and visual images created through the written word by travellers seeking to capture the world around them. This section discusses how members of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant’s families and Bell and Grant themselves verbally ‘sketched’ their surroundings while travelling, another example of art, photography and travel colliding.

### **Photographic Words: The Verbal Sketch**

Photography was central to the nineteenth century travel experience. Images related to travel allowed those viewing them, even if they had not travelled to the location themselves, to see sites, landscapes and monuments vicariously, to experience places “by means of images and signs, evoking and evoked by reverie and desire.”<sup>93</sup> Hand in hand with standardisation of travel photography throughout the nineteenth century was the increasing popularity of the guidebook providing an authoritative guide to foreign climes. According to Rudy Koshar guides by Murray, Baedeker and Thomas Cook were “a great leveller of knowledge and culture” for both men and women who had not received a good classical education.<sup>94</sup> Guidebooks also gave the continental traveller of the 1860s “reassur[ance] and a reaffirmation in its familiarity.”<sup>95</sup> Familiarity and reassurance are also the hallmarks of everyday experience and Marjorie Morgan suggests that reference to or engagement with these emotions by travellers in the Victorian period was central to their sense of national identity and belongingness.<sup>96</sup> Morgan identifies “landscape, religious ritual, food and drink, manners, recreational

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<sup>91</sup> Hughes and Noble, *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>92</sup> Osborne, *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture*, p. 56.

<sup>93</sup> Osborne, *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture*, p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> Palmowski, ‘Travels with Baedeker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain’, p. 116.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>96</sup> Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, p.4.

rituals [and] methods of hierarchical ordering” as factors which contributed to the development of national identity among travelling Victorians.<sup>97</sup> Remarking on the foreign nature of people and situations in diaries and letters was also typical among Britons abroad. Morgan states that complaints varied widely from “canal stench, garlic breath, vibrating steamers, dust-filled carriages and German pipe smokers.”<sup>98</sup> This authentication of experience is furthered by commentaries on interactions with the unfamiliar: “ships, trains, hotels, bizarre customs, odd people, crazy weather, startling architecture, curious food.”<sup>99</sup> Paul Fussell underlines this descriptive convention and notes that it is often paired with the concept of the deeper value of travelling for purposes of “psychological, artistic, religious or political” fulfilment.<sup>100</sup>

Victorian travel writing by men and women, whether by published account or private letter or diary, often demonstrates similarities in writing technique, tone and subject matter to the guidebooks which often shaped their respective journeys. In her chapter ‘Borders and Boundaries, Perspective and Place: Victorian women’s travel writing’ Maria H. Frawley provides two notable examples of common threads to be found between Victorian travel writing and photography. She suggests there are imperialist overtones to be found in travellers’ descriptions of encounters with “that which cannot be described and the encounter with that which has not yet been described.”<sup>101</sup> Importantly photographs taken in this environment often impose a sense of Englishness or “imperial taste and sensibility continually mirrored back to its protagonists.”<sup>102</sup> Frawley also notes repeated use of the “verbal sketch” to “deploy perspective, horizon, distance, colour and shade in ways designed to evoke visual images of their subjects to control the gaze of their reader.”<sup>103</sup>

Conversely, some travellers wished to distance themselves from this sense of national identification that would mark them out as tourists in a foreign land. Such travellers abhorred the commercial aspect of mass tourism and judged themselves superior in

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars*, p. 214.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>101</sup> M. Frawley, ‘Borders and Boundaries, Perspectives and Place: Victorian Travel Writing’, pp.33-34.

<sup>102</sup> R. Ray, ‘A Dream of Beauty: Inscribing the English Garden in India’, p.63.

<sup>103</sup> Frawley, ‘Borders and Boundaries, Perspectives and Place: Victorian Travel Writing’, p.34.

“intellect, education, curiosity and spirit” to their counterparts.<sup>104</sup> The verbal sketch can therefore be viewed as a narrative counterpart to the travel photograph’s visual representation of person and place. The following section draws out elements of the verbal sketch from the personal correspondence of Bell, Grant and their families and discusses the ways in which they appropriated and opposed the conventions of the genre and how these narrative journeys inform their visual counterpart, the travel photograph.

Vanessa Bell’s great-aunt, Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), the noted Victorian photographer and key influence on Bell’s artistic and photographic sensibility and technique, included some elements of the verbal sketch in her unfinished memoir *Annals of My Glass House* written in 1874. Reflecting on the positive feedback her photographs had received she singles out a letter from a correspondent from Germany:

An exceedingly kind man from Berlin displayed great zeal, for which I have ever felt grateful to him. Writing in a foreign language, he evidently consulted the dictionary which gives two or three meanings for each word, and in the choice between these two or three the result is very comical. I can only wish that I was able to deal with all foreign tongues as felicitously.<sup>105</sup>

Cameron’s letters also reveal that she was not only a voluminous correspondent but that she also frequently wrote letters while in transport. An undated extract from a letter from Cameron to Alfred Lord Tennyson included in Anne Thackeray Ritchie’s published memoir *From Friend to Friend* bears this out:

Dear Alfred – I wrote to you from the Wandsworth Station yesterday on the way to Bromley. As I was folding your letter came the scream of the train, and the yells of the porters with threats that the train would not wait for me, so that although I got a far as in the direction as your name, I was obliged to run down the steps, and trust the directing and despatch for the whole to strange hands.<sup>106</sup>

A letter to Ritchie herself from 1875, in which Cameron describes being made to stay below deck during unsettled weather while she, husband Charles and son Hardinge were en route to make their plantation estates in Ceylon their final home, recounts the experience in harrowing detail:

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<sup>104</sup> Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars*, p.40.

<sup>105</sup> J.M. Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House: Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, text by V. Hamilton (Claremont: Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, 1996), p. 14.

<sup>106</sup> J.M. Cameron to A. Tennyson, no date, reproduced in A.T. Ritchie, *From Friend to Friend*, ed. by E. Ritchie (London: John Murray, 1919), p. 23-24.

The heat of the Red Sea has rather knocked us up. The breeze has been very strong and very hot, so that we have been much knocked about and last night our ports were closed, our forehatch closed and we were all like prisoners in a black hole. The fault was our own, for almost all the others slept either on the deck or on the cuddy table in the saloon. Beds i.e. mattresses [sic] were placed down the whole length of the table and men, women and girls all slept there. Har strongly advised us to keep to our cabins and I assented but it was a great mistake. My husband bore it all as he has borne everything without suffering but I felt asphyxiated and my Har has been very ill all today. He says it is sea sickness but I know it is the poisoned condition of want of air...About 4 am came deliverance for us. The sea had gone down a little and a man with freckled face, reddish hair, upturned shirt-sleeves came in hot haste to open out ports. I said to him, "Are you the quartermaster" and he answered "No, I am the joiner" as if he were Quince, a bit of Shakespeare. ..So mark me, if on your voyage out to us they ever shut your port never remain in your cabin, and I only hope someone will give you a pretty a dressing gown as some one has given to me!<sup>107</sup>

Though these letters describe travel experiences in a way not uncommon in the Victorian period, Cameron's narrative style, full of movement, colour, shape and form, is indicative of an artistic sensibility and sets Cameron apart from many of her contemporaries in her use of the verbal sketch. She has an artist's gaze and a photographer's eye. Another example is a letter written to Alfred Lord Tennyson en route to Ceylon describing her surroundings:

...A real gem of the ocean [Malta]; everything glittering like a fairy world, the sapphire sea, the pearl-white houses, the emerald and ruby boats, the shining steps, a hundred and thirty-two in number, from the Quai to the town – all was delicious. As Har observed, I was the most child-like and exuberant of the party – only one thing disappointed me, that I did not telegraph to my Ceylon boys. We visited the Cathedral of St. John. How delicious the silence was after the life on board!<sup>108</sup>

What we might view as Cameron's public "travel photography" took a different vein altogether. Well-known among her family and friends for always travelling with bundles of her photographs to be given to fellow passengers, guardsmen and porters alike, Cameron made a presentation in 1872 of eleven of her photographs to Brockenhurst Station each inscribed with the following expression of appreciation: "This gallery of the great men of our age is presented to this room by Mrs. Cameron in grateful memory of this being the spot where she first met one of her sons after a long

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<sup>107</sup> J.M. Cameron to A.T. Ritchie, 10 November 1875, Gernsheim Collection, reproduced in Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>108</sup> J.M. Cameron to A. Tennyson, no date, reproduced in Ritchie, *From Friend to Friend*, p. 32-33.

absence of four years in Ceylon. 11<sup>th</sup> November 1871.”<sup>109</sup> This act not only captures Cameron’s “genial, ardent, and generous nature” as Vanessa Bell’s mother Julia Princep Stephen recounted in the entry she wrote on Cameron for the first edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1885 but also suggests Cameron’s awareness of rail travel and the rail passengers’ need of occupation and visual stimulation while waiting for the arrival or departure of their trains.<sup>110</sup> A similar presentation was made by Hester Thackeray Fuller, daughter of Cameron’s close friend Annie Thackeray Ritchie, at Yarmouth Pier in the 1920s.<sup>111</sup>

Vanessa Bell’s father, Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), was happy to allow romance into his personal reminiscences but could not abide what he saw as the disruptive presence of tourists. In an article written for the *National Review* in 1894 entitled ‘A Substitute for the Alps’ Stephen discussed at length his distaste for the growth in Alpine tourism:

We rushed with delight into that enchanted land; climbed peaks and passé; made proselytes in every direction to the new creed; and ended, alas! By rubbing off the bloom of early romance, and laying the whole country open to the incursions of the ordinary tourist...Huge caravanserais replace the hospitable inn; railways creep to the foot of Monte Rosa and the summit of the Wengern Alp...The tourist despatches Switzerland as rapidly and thoughtlessly as he does Olympia; and the very name of the Alps, so musical in the ears of those who enjoyed her mysterious charm, suggests little more than the hurry and jostling of an average sight-seeing trip. It is sad.<sup>112</sup>

Leslie Stephen viewed himself as an educated and educating traveller during both his frequent journeys to the Alps and Europe and his two extensive trips to the United States in 1863 and 1890. In his biography of Stephen, F.W. Maitland provides a diary entry from Stephen’s mother that shows he took his role as a knowledgeable and experienced traveller very seriously. She writes on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1860: “We all went to Clapham...to hear Leslie’s lecture on the Alps: most interesting — capitally delivered — everybody delighted with it: his photographs and [his sister’s] large

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<sup>109</sup> Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*, pp.15 and 50, and H. Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), p.53.

<sup>110</sup> J.P. Stephen, *Julia Margaret Cameron*, entry for the *National Dictionary of Biography*, in Gillespie and Steele (eds.), *Julia Duckworth Stephen: Stories for Children, Essays for Adults*, p.214.

<sup>111</sup> Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*, p.174.

<sup>112</sup> L. Stephen, ‘A Substitute for the Alps’ in *Men, Books and Mountains*, ed by S.O.A. Ullman (London: Hogarth Press, 1956), p.24.

drawings hung up, making a most beautiful exhibition.”<sup>113</sup> Stephen’s disaffection with the ignorant tourist who followed the beaten track is clearly spelt out in an essay entitled ‘Vacations’ written for Cornhill Magazine in 1869 and is worth quoting at length:

Follow the Briton abroad, we find him scarcely better off for powers of enjoyment. Let any intelligent person strike into the tracks of a party of Mr. Cook’s tourists and study their modes of passing their time. Watch them in picture-galleries, at churches, or in celebrated scenery, and try to determine whether their enjoyment be genuine, or a mere conventional parade. Two or three painfully notorious facts are enough to settle the question. The ordinary tourist has no independent judgement; he admires what the infallible Murray orders him to admire; or in other words, he does not admire at all. The tourist never diverges one hair’s breath from the beaten track of his predecessors, and within a few miles of the best known routes in Europe leaves nooks and corners as unsophisticated as they were fifty years ago; which proves that he has not sufficient interest in his route to assert his own free will. The tourist, again, is intensely gregarious; he shrinks from foreigners even in their own land, and likes to have a conversation with his fellows about cotton-prints or the rate of discount in the shadow of Mont Blanc: that is, when he imagines himself to be taking his pleasures abroad, his real delight consists in returning in imagination to his own shop. The tourist, in short, is notoriously a person who follows blindly a certain hackneyed round; who never stops long enough before a picture or a view to admire it or fix it in his memory; and who seizes every opportunity of transplanting little bits of London to the districts he visits.<sup>114</sup>

A later letter paints a colourful and chaotic picture of the tourists in the Alps:

...This house is swarming throughout with the most alarming vermin...commercial travellers who bump into other peoples’ chairs & yell for brandy and & water toutdesuite & women in scarlet with tartan petticoats of blowsy appearance & a vile parson with a neckcloth like a white chimneypot & a wretched crowd of limp beings with alpenstocks tipped with chamois horns, - such as I never saw in my life. Their talk or rather infernal chatter they incessantly keep up, is all out of Bradshaw’s Guide...I am disgusted. Zermatt used to be like a little heaven here below (especially last year) & now it is going to be inundated with the beings of the contemptible shopkeeper order. Minny says this isn’t a radical sentiment – I don’t care – I shd like to fence out all foreigners & snobs & their wives from this one valley...<sup>115</sup>

This is a condemning characterisation of tourists and tourism yet in his personal correspondence Leslie Stephen exhibits characteristics of Victorian tourist behaviour, namely the use of the verbal sketch, to furnish descriptions of people and customs as a

<sup>113</sup> Jane Catherine Stephen, in Maitland (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, p.101.

<sup>114</sup> L. Stephen, ‘Vacations’ in *Men, Books, and Mountains*, ed by S.O.A. Ullman (London: Hogarth Press, 1956) p. 174.

<sup>115</sup> L. Stephen to A. Thackeray, Friday 18 July 1867, reproduced in Bicknell (ed.), *Selected Letters of Leslie Stephen Volume 1 1864-1882*, p.51.

confirmation of national identity. Typically letters written by Stephen while abroad include a description of the journey to get there, reference to food eaten and an analysis, usually negative, of local people and sites. A letter written to his mother on the 12th of July 1863 on his first of two trips to America contains all these elements:

...From Halifax we had thick fog to Boston. I was awaked by feeling the steamboat stop on entering the harbour at 5 on Thursday morning [July 9] in a steady rain. Since then I have been steadily occupied in taking in first impressions of Yankee-land, which are very lively and amusing. It already begins to feel more familiar, and I suppose I shall not often take in so much novelty in any future three days. So I will tell you what the state of my mind is at present, and you will see how I have been getting on without any exact journal. Now as to the people. . . . The first thing that struck me was their extremely foreign appearance. I don't mean that they looked like Frenchmen or any inferior foreigners, but they looked most intensely Yankee. They all looked sallow and thin. I don't see how they can help it if they have much of the sultry weather we are getting just now. They wear the regulation beards and straw hats that you see in Punch, and I said to myself at almost every man I met, ' No one could mistake you for anything but a pure Yankee,' . . . and, though I now see a good many men whom I should not know from Englishmen, I have still hardly seen one fat or fresh- coloured individual, and I feel myself almost fat among these lean creatures...All that I have had occasion to speak to have been very civil and obliging. I have been about to various sights, of most of which it is not worthwhile to make mention, a ' sight ' being in a general way a thing not to be seen...<sup>116</sup>

Paris too receives Stephen's scathing review in a letter written to his friend C.E. Norton:

I took a holiday in Paris a short while ago, and had a queer mixture of impressions. I was poisoned at an infernal cafe, and saw a young woman at the play dying in convulsions for many minutes, and finally came home, thoroughly bewildered, with a sore throat, from which I am not yet free.<sup>117</sup>

Assessing the tone and content of these letters we see that Stephen is very much an Englishman of his age when characterising the 'foreign.' The French are described as inferior, their food "poisonous" and their theatre strange and pointless. Americans are notable for their odd form of dress, "regulation beards and straw hats." Tourists described in the Alps letters are not identified by nationality because they have been reduced to the "most alarming vermin." Stephen decries their coarseness, lack of manners, and lack of intelligence and free thought, evidenced by their reliance on guide

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<sup>116</sup> L. Stephen to Jane Catherine Stephen, 12 July 1863, reproduced in Maitland (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, pp.109-110.

<sup>117</sup> L. Stephen to C.E. Norton, 2 May 1874, reproduced in Maitland (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, p.241.

books, in class-oriented terms. To Stephen's upper middle class sensibilities they appear to be of the "contemptible shopkeeper order."

The words and photographic images depicting Leslie Stephen's travels are in many ways a contradiction. They present a man who clearly shares with the men and women of his age attitudes toward foreignness, class and education. He projects a public identity through the photographic image in a conventional way by means of the fixed and artificial lens of the studio photographer. On the other hand, Stephen's letters show a man who was aware of what the tourism industry was trying to do and placed himself in opposition to it. In the same vein, the photographs taken during his 1889 visit to Switzerland with his second wife Julia betray an interest in naturalness and informality that is strikingly different and perhaps, it could be said, strikingly modern.

### **Capturing the Romance of the Alps: Leslie Stephen on Tourism and the Alpine Experience**

Vanessa Bell's parents Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) and Julia Princep Stephen (1846-1895) travelled widely in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe. This section examines images from the Charleston Collection and the photograph albums of Leslie Stephen now located at Smith College, Massachusetts, that document these travels. These images demonstrate a clear engagement with travel and photographic conventions of the Victorian period.

The tourism industry exploded in the Alps in the 1840s and 1850s, the enthusiasm of its visitors stoked by guides like *Murray's Switzerland* already in its eighth edition by 1858 and Thomas Cook's *Handbook to Switzerland* published in 1874.<sup>118</sup> The majority of tourists to the Alps at this time were English. Largely this was due to the phenomenal influence of John Ruskin's meditations on the meaning and value of the alpine experience.<sup>119</sup> In spite of his reproach for these bandwagon visitors to the Alps Leslie Stephen acknowledged the influence of Ruskin in shaping his ideas stating:

I owe him a personal debt. Many people had tried their hands upon Alpine descriptions since Saussure, but Ruskin's chapters seem to have the freshness of a

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<sup>118</sup> Palmowski, 'Travels with Baedeker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *Histories of Leisure*, ed. R. Koshar, pp.109-110.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.106,113.



new revelation. The fourth volume of *Modern Painters* infected me and other members of the Alpine Club with an enthusiasm.<sup>120</sup>

While the Alps served as a perceptual flashpoint for Ruskin and Stephen, they parted ways in their conception of the Alpine experience. Flowing from Edmund Burke's definition of the sublime as one's experience when encountering phenomena that are vast and terrifying, they agree that sublimity represents an elevation of mind but differ in how that state is achieved. To Ruskin, the Alps were cathedrals, schools and objects to be revered, not climbed which would violate their sanctity. Stephen, on the other hand, saw mountaineering and physical engagement with the mountains as an athletic and deeply meaningful enterprise whereby imaginative perception and sublime experience are produced by contact with the physical world. It is, he contends, an experience that neither literature nor the artist's brush can capture. In *The Playground of Europe* Stephen wrote that even if "the most eloquent language is...but a poor substitute for a painter's brush...a painter's brush lags far behind the grandest aspects of nature."<sup>121</sup> The contemplation of nature, he said "is one of those rare moments of life at which all the surrounding scenery is instantaneously and indelibly photographed on the mental retina a process which no second-hand operation can even dimly transfer to others."<sup>122</sup>

Stephen was one of the most prominent figures in what is described as the "golden age of alpinism," the period between the ascent by Sir Alfred Willis and his party of the Wetterhorn in 1854 and that of the Matterhorn by Edward Whymper in 1865. Many major peaks in the Alps saw their first ascent in this period and Stephen, usually accompanied by his favourite Swiss guide Melchoir Anderegg, is credited with nine of them. He was president of the Alpine Club from 1865 to 1868 and in 1903, during his final illness, presented the Club with two old ice axes and an alpenstock that, he wrote to the President Sir Martin Conway on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1903 "reminded me of some of the pleasantest days of my life."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> L. Stephen, *The Victorian Mountaineers*, ed by R. Clarke (London: BT Batsford, 1953), p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> L. Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, (London and New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1909), p. 305.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Stephen, *Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, p. 488

General enthusiasm for the Alps was captured in a number of ways, including letters, journals, guidebooks and the medium of photography.<sup>124</sup> Ironically it was often difficult to take successful photographs out of doors in the alpine climate so individuals and large groups flocked to photography studios to have their climbing endeavours preserved for posterity surrounded by stock props of flowers and furnishings native to the area.<sup>125</sup> Leslie Stephen was no exception to the rule as an 1862 image of him holding an alpenstock demonstrates (Figure 28).

In Leslie Stephen's letters and published works, the Alps are visualised and interpreted with a mixture of romance and realism. Noel Annan characterised Stephen as an "Alpine sentimentalist first and last, [who] luxuriated on his memories."<sup>126</sup> Indeed in recollecting the sudden death of his first wife Marion (Minny) Thackeray (1840-1875), he remarked: "I always...associate my Minny with the Alps...We had brought home some roots of purple sweet scented Primiero; and I have always loved them and taken them in their grace and sweetness as a kind of emblem of my darling."<sup>127</sup> He and Minny had travelled to the Alps for their honeymoon in 1867.<sup>128</sup> A photograph taken during this time communicates a sense of romance tempered with the unhidden reality that is a studio production (Figure 29). The photographer has made every effort to focus on the couple, the key element of the photograph, while contextualising their "story" with various props. This is a portrait of an English couple abroad, civilised, educated and well-mannered, against a painted misty backdrop of conifers and the looming Alps beyond. Props in the photograph, the chair, stool, books and potted plant, provide a sense of formality and civility in the fore and middle ground, particularly contrasted to the backdrop, while helping to enhance the sense of three dimensional space, a stock in trade of the studio photographer.

In stark contrast to the studio portrait a series of photographs taken by Leslie Stephen's friend Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913) documenting a visit by Stephen and his second wife Julia to the Alps in 1889 exhibit a refreshing realism and informality that differ from the

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<sup>124</sup> Stephen, *The Victorian Mountaineers*, p. 115.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> N. Annan, *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* (London: Random House, 1984), p. 94.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen, *Sir Leslie Stephen's Mausoleum Book*, p. 22.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.11.

stiffness and formality of studio productions.<sup>129</sup> These are snapshots taken by a friend in unguarded moments though the image quality suggests that photographers were still grappling with the issues that accompanied attempts to take exterior photographs in the harsh alpine climate (Figures 30-34).

One of Loppé's images in the Charleston Collection held particular value for Vanessa Bell as her favourite photograph of her mother and was also treasured by Leslie Stephen.<sup>130</sup> Showing Julia Stephen and taken on holiday in Grinwald in 1899, it pictures a very intimate moment in the course of this holiday where Julia peers out of a sunlit window of 'The Bear' Hotel. Placement of the photograph within a velvet-lined case speaks both to its value as a family possession and its easily transportable size; it is possible the photograph was printed and cut to size in the course of their time in Grinwald (Figure 35).<sup>131</sup>

## **Exoticism, Cultural Difference and Hierarchy in Victorian and Bloomsbury Photographs**

Now for an absurdly small sum, we may become familiar not only with every famous locality in the world, but also with almost every man of note in Europe. The ubiquity of the photographer is something wonderful. All of us have seen the Alps and know Chamonix and the Mer de Glace by heart, though we have never braved the horrors of the Channel....We have crossed the Andes, ascended Tenerife, entered Japan and the Thousand Isles, drunk delights of battles with our peers (at shop windows), sat at the councils of the mighty, grown familiar with kings, emperors and queens, prima donnas, pets of the ballet, and "well graced actors." Ghosts have we seen and have not trembled; stood before royalty and have not uncovered; and looked in short, through a three-inch lens at every single pomp and vanity of this wicked but beautiful world.<sup>132</sup>

This section turns to images in the Charleston Collection that explicitly relate to travel, picturing landscapes and "foreign climes," incorporating recently donated material with images long connected with Charleston. Both domestically and internationally

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<sup>129</sup> Gabriel Loppé, climber, painter and photographer was born in Montpellier and travelled to Geneva in 1864 to study under the landscape artist Didav. He is primarily known for his large canvases of alpine landscape and mountain peaks. Julia Margaret Cameron was a main influence on his photographic technique and he was one of the first photographers to capture urban scenes.

<sup>130</sup> Maitland (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, p. 397.

<sup>131</sup> J. Hannavy, *Case Histories: The Packaging and Presentation of the Photographic Portrait in Victorian Britain 1840-1875* (London: Antique Collectors Club, 2005).

<sup>132</sup> D.P. "'Once a Week' London 1<sup>st</sup> June 1861", reproduced in Sontag, *On Photography*, p.184.

photographers were keen to provide visitors a picturesque memento of their visit. Home examples include F. Bedford's "Tenby, St Catherine's Island from the South cliff", notable as "View 270" (Figure 36). This image is likely to have been bought by Duncan Grant's father Bartle Grant who was stationed there in 1901 and described it as "a very pretty sweet little seaside place" in a letter to his sister Jane Maria, Lady Strachey (née Grant).<sup>133</sup> The photographer Francis Bedford (1816-1894) had, prior to developing his interest in photography, studied architecture and lithography and exhibited architectural drawings at the Annual Exhibitions of the Royal Academy on numerous occasions. His photographic work gained royal attention when he was commissioned to photograph objects in the royal collection but he became best known for landscape photography, both of the British Isles and later the Near East as a member of the Prince of Wales entourage on a four month tour there in 1862. The circa 1867 view of St Catherine's Island was included in Bedford's *Photographic Views, of Tenby and Neighbourhood* published in 1867. It is plausible that Bartle Grant chose to document his time spent in Tenby with the cheaper carte de visite rather than a whole folio of images.<sup>134</sup> The *Art Journal* review of Bedford's first publication of this kind, a selection of views of North Wales, again points to the intertwined perception of photography, art and tourism in the Victorian period stating: "...The series of the latter is large, and comprehends a considerable number of the leading objects which excite the wonder and admiration of tourists, and have been the special delights of artists time out of mind."<sup>135</sup>

A dramatic painted image of Brighton Pier also demonstrates the close connection between art, photography and travel at this time (Figure 37). Drawings, paintings and engravings reproduced as photographic carte de visite and cabinet sized images were often aimed at the passing tourist trade, particularly in a seaside destination like Brighton. William Hall and Son's studio was located at 80 West Street in Brighton

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<sup>133</sup> B. Grant to Jane Strachey, Tenby 1901, British Museum, MSS Eur F127/312.

<sup>134</sup> W. Johnson, *Francis Bedford (1816-1894) Bibliography*, 30 May 2012, <http://vintagephotosjohnson.com/2012/05/30/francis-bedford-1816-1894-bibliography/> [accessed 12 October 2013].

<sup>135</sup> Anonymous, 'Minor Topics of the Month. Photographs and Stereoscopic Views by Mr. F. Bedford', *ART JOURNAL* ns 6:4 (Apr. 1860): 126, reproduced in Johnson, *Francis Bedford (1816-1894) Bibliography*.

between 1887 and 1895.<sup>136</sup> Hall had also been an early producer of carte de visite images of local celebrities.<sup>137</sup>

Commercial photographers overseas were arguably the most adept at providing the kinds of images that tourists wanted to take home as representative of their journey. Within the Charleston Collection the series of 'Views of India' by noted photographer Samuel Bourne and multiple prints of interiors and exteriors photographs of living spaces in India by Watts and Skeens of Rangoon, possibly by Duncan Grant's parents during their time there. The images exemplify what these collective sets sought to communicate. It is notable that when Grant's parents took a shared lease of a house in Twickenham in 1923 with Grant's aunt, Daisy McNeil, and her companion Miss Elwes, they brought with them all manner of objects and furnishings from their time in India.<sup>138</sup> Daisy McNeil, an explorer and member of the Royal Geographic Society, also established a dark room in the house where she kept photographs collected on her travels around the world.<sup>139</sup> Other Grant relations also had an interest in collecting images of India. Richard Strachey (1817-1908) Grant's uncle in law, soldier and colonial administrator, also amassed a collection of one hundred and thirty images of northern India and Pakistan, one hundred and twenty seven of which are on permanent loan to the British Library.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> D. Simkin, *Directory of Photographic Studios in Brighton and Hove 1841-1910*, August 2005, <http://photohistory-sussex.co.uk/index.htm> [accessed 6 September 2013].

<sup>137</sup> D. Simkin, *Photographic History of Brighton: Local Celebrity Cartes*, August 2005, <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/DSphotomass4D5.htm> [accessed 9 September 2013].

<sup>138</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.251.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p.252.

<sup>140</sup> Collection of loose prints on original card mounts, with contemporary pencilled captions, from the collection of Sir Richard Strachey. Fuller captions from the Bourne & Shepherd catalogue have been added in square brackets where these supply fuller or precise information. The original collection apparently comprised a total of 130 prints, but three appear to have been mislaid. Three additional prints found with collection have been returned to Photo 45, from where they originally came. This collection appears to have been re-arranged and re-numbered at least twice in the past. Since almost all the prints (with the exception of 8 photographs) are numbered views from the Bourne & Shepherd catalogue, this order has been adopted for the catalogue and for future reference. This collection forms an important and extensive set of views of northern India and Pakistan by Shepherd & Robertson (c.1862) and Samuel Bourne (1863-c.66), and includes topographical and architectural studies from Agra, Delhi, Lucknow, Simla, Srinagar (and Kashmir generally), Naini Tal and Lahore. There are also many views recording Bourne's photographic expeditions in the Himalayas in 1864 and 1866. 'Catalogue entry for Strachey Collection of Indian Views (Shelfmark Photo 222)' India Office Select Materials, The British Library.

The Grant family had a long history of service in colonial government in India. Grant's great grandfather Sir John Peter Grant had been a judge in Bombay and ended his career as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Calcutta while his grandfather Sir John Grant rose through the ranks to become Lieutenant-Governor of the Central Provinces and Bengal and Governor of Jamaica from 1866-74.<sup>141</sup> Bartle Grant, Duncan Grant's father, first went to India in 1883 where he was stationed in Meerut having been made a Captain and it was there he met his future wife Ethel Isabel MacNeil. They married in 1884.<sup>142</sup> It appears that Bartle Grant was not very happy in India, debt being a constant problem that led to a demotion of office and near court martial. It would be strange if these worries had not coloured Bartle Grant's view of India. In a letter to his sister Jane Strachey from June of 1883, soon after his arrival, he gives a clear indication of his first impressions. After thanking her for sending him new "delicious" photographs of family he writes of instances that had occurred "just before I left for this hateful country."<sup>143</sup> Grant's mother Ethel was perhaps more susceptible to the pleasures of colonial life or keener to paint a more optimistic picture amid the difficulties that straightened finances created. A move to the Royal Garrison Regiment, Malta, in September 1899 following the outbreak of the Boer War created new opportunities for social interaction. She remarked to her sister-in-law Jane Strachey in November 1901: "I do not care for this place, but they say it grows on one so there is still hope."<sup>144</sup> By January 1902 Ethel wrote that they were "being very gay, almost too much going on, we never seem to get any sleep..."<sup>145</sup> This suggests an improvement on Ethel Grant's earlier impressions.

The photographic images of Samuel Bourne and Watts and Skeens demonstrate clearly the desire of these and similar commercial photographers to present India as a strange and exotic landscape but one stamped with enough "Englishness" to reassure the viewer at home.

Samuel Bourne first went to India in 1863 with the intention, according to Arthur Ollman, of "apply[ing] his romantic aesthetic to the uncharted Indian wilderness and to

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<sup>141</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, pp.2-3.

<sup>142</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.7.

<sup>143</sup> B. Grant to J. Strachey, 18 June 1883, British Library, MSS Eur F127.

<sup>144</sup> E. Grant to J. Strachey, 10 November 1901, British Library, MSS Eur F127.

<sup>145</sup> E. Grant to J. Strachey, 3 January 1902, British Library, MSS Eur F127.

add to the English awareness of the corners of the Empire by bringing back clear pictorial evidence.”<sup>146</sup> Bourne’s ‘Views’ picture India in a very specific way. An image of a waterfall (Figure 38) emphasizes the powerful untamed element present in the Indian landscape. The waterfall is depicted as a dramatic force, both in scale and movement, with the spray rising from the water as it falls in a seemingly solid curtain. These types of landscape images were not generally popular with tourists visiting India who showed a preference for images of buildings in or near city centres. Photographs of wilderness were therefore printed less often. It is interesting in light of this that Bartle and Ethel Grant selected a number of these types of images to purchase.<sup>147</sup> More typically Grant’s parents also purchased photographs by Bourne featuring Indian architecture, all of which focus on the large scale of the buildings and the exotic shapes and designs so evidently different to those of the United Kingdom (Figures 39).

The Charleston Collection also contains a series of interior and exterior photographs of a house in Rangoon, India, by photographers Watts and Skeens. F.A.E Skeens who had previously established a firm with his brother based in Ceylon in 1878 went into partnership with H.W. Watts to open a branch in Rangoon in 1888.<sup>148</sup> The photographs in Charleston’s collection can likely be traced to Duncan Grant’s parents since Bartle Grant was stationed in Rangoon from 1894 to 1898.

The interior of the drawing room shows a fairly typical Victorian interior filled with furniture, ornaments, artworks and, importantly, photographs. In many ways the only visual indication that this photograph is not an English drawing room is the exotic palm like plants placed throughout the space and the eastern-influenced screen by the window (Figure 40). An interesting accompaniment to these images is a leather bound scrapbook kept by the Grant family in 1894 detailing Colonial life in Malta and Rangoon and beyond. Containing menus and guest lists, invites and press cuttings, the photographs included perform a central role in visually representing the social calendar of the Grants

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<sup>146</sup> A. Ollman, *Samuel Bourne: Images of India*, (California: The Friends of Photography, 1983), p.7.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>148</sup> *Royal Commonwealth Society Index*, 2003, University of Cambridge Library, [http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/rscs\\_photographers/entry.php?id=471](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/rscs_photographers/entry.php?id=471) [accessed 25, July 2011].

during their time abroad. The photographs range from typical tourist views of temples and tall ships to more private images such as a child playing in a garden (Figure 41).<sup>149</sup>

Connected images in the Charleston Collection of the “Colonial House and Garden” (Figure 42) by Watts and Skeens and an exterior portrait of Duncan Grant’s mother (Figure 43) make more explicit references to colonial rule betraying, like all photographs examined in this section, the exoticism and difference of the location. Later images in the Charleston Collection demonstrate that there was a sustained interest in picturing the individual in relation to the Colonial environment among relations and friends of the Grant family (Figures 44-45).

Other Charleston Collection images provide insight into the types of images that commercial photographers were producing for tourists. One was the ‘traditional dress’ photograph. There are two examples in the Charleston Collection, both carte de visites. The first is by W.A. Eurenienius and P.L. Quist Studios of Stockholm (Figure 46). This image depicts five figures in traditional dress and is hand coloured. The second image from the studios of Harold Baker depicts a woman in eastern dress (Figure 47). Another image type common at this time was picturing working people in foreign lands, as illustrated by a cabinet photograph from the studios of Galesse Francesco figlo based in Imola, Northern Italy. The photograph pictures local labourers and servants. (Figure 48).

A Julia Margaret Cameron photograph of workers on the Cameron coffee estates in Ceylon shares the same interest in presenting cultural difference through the depiction of working people (Figure 49). Cameron had also commissioned photographs of the working people at Dimbola, her home on the Isle of Wight, prior to receiving a camera from her daughter as a present in 1864 (Figures 50-51). These genre photographs are now thought to be largely a collaborative effort between Cameron and Oscar Gustave Rejlander who visited Cameron in the spring of 1863 having journeyed to the Isle of Wight to photograph Alfred Lord Tennyson and his family. Recent scholarship suggests Cameron may have paid Rejlander to take the images under her direction though possibly she may have taken the photographs where Rejlander himself

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<sup>149</sup> Though the Scrapbook may have been purchased in 1894, Figure 43 shows an entry from 1923



appears.<sup>150</sup> This assertion is seemingly verified in P.H. Emerson's 1890 account of Cameron's work in which he records that prior to 1864 Cameron "spent hundreds of pounds in paying the degraders of the art to fix the faces of her friends...Her photographers were ordered with lavishness to work for her, often under her immediate supervision."<sup>151</sup> The likelihood that Cameron and Rejlander were working together in both a collaborative and employer/employee relationship gives these images an added dimension which links them to similar images produced much later by Vanessa Bell (Figures 52-54).

Photography was central to the nineteenth century travel experience. Travel images allowed viewers to see and experience foreign people, sites and monuments "by means of images and signs, evoking and evoked by reverie and desire."<sup>152</sup> Most travel-related photographs acquired during Victorian period were produced by commercial photographers who were expected to provide images mixing accuracy and realism with "shop-window spectacle of the exotic."<sup>153</sup> They were purchased both by travellers to the actual locations and by those interested but remaining at home.

### **Bloomsbury's Appropriation and Opposition to Conventions in Travel Writing and Photography**

Victorian conventions of picturing travel through images and the written word can be traced in popular guidebooks and private narratives, in photograph albums and personal correspondence. Vanessa Bell's and Duncan Grant's letters suggest that their generation was equally influenced by these ways of seeing the world, sometimes adopting a similar mindset and at others actively setting themselves in opposition to the conventional tourist. Photographs in the Charleston Collection and Vanessa Bell's photograph albums in the Tate Gallery Archive visually document this exchange with travel conventions as do the published writings and preparatory photographic reproductions belonging to Clive Bell (1881-1964) which remain at Charleston.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> J. Bear, 'The Silent Partner: Agency and Absence in Julia Margaret Cameron's Collaborations', *Grey Room*, No.48, Summer 2012, pp.78–101.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Osborne, *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture*, p.17.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>154</sup> Clive Bell lived at Charleston intermittently from 1916, becoming a more permanent resident in 1939.

## Clive Bell: Art, Photography and Travel

Clive Bell published a number of manuscripts over his lengthy career as an art critic, including *Art* (1914), *Since Cézanne* (1922), *Civilization* (1928), *Proust* (1929), *Landmarks in 19th Century Painting* (1927), *An Account of French Painting* (1931), *Enjoying Paintings* (1934) and *Old Friends* (1956). Many of the photographic reproductions in these texts are still to be found in the Charleston Collection. The annotations on the reverse of these photographs offer great insight into how he used them in the process of writing and preparing books for publication and this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Clive Bell's publications communicated works of art to great numbers of people by means of photographic reproductions as a substitute for viewing the original and potentially as a stimulus for the reader to travel to see the works in person. Though Bell exhorts the reader that "Art cannot come to the people: people must come to the art, or leave it alone," his narrative in *An Account of French Painting and Landmarks in 19th Century Painting* instructs by using photographic images to bring the artworks under discussion to a wider public.<sup>155</sup> By emphasising the importance of seeing the original works Bell implies the act of travelling and thereby places the reproduced images in the realm of travel photography. He even goes so far as to term his text a "guide-book."<sup>156</sup> Similarly his use of the verbal sketch offers an interesting parallel to the travel letters of Julia Margaret Cameron, Leslie Stephen and Vanessa Bell and the conventions of travel writing set out in the authoritative travel guides of the Victorian and Edwardian period.

A notable similarity is the author's assumption of the role of tour guide. In Clive Bell's *Landmarks in Nineteenth Century Painting* this conceit is clearly spelled out in the preface and is worth quoting at length:

I wished to make a chart of Nineteenth-Century Painting so as to indicate the lie of the land. Between the Neo-Classical revival and the end of Impressionism lies one of the richest territories, and perhaps quite the strangest, in the world of painting. This territory I have surveyed in the spirit of an old-fashioned road-map maker, and have dealt, or tried to deal, with the road from David to Cezanne as one of those amazing topographers who flourished about the beginning of my period would have dealt with from London to Dover. Like Messers. Tomble-son of Paternoster Row, while never forgetting that my humble duty is to guide, I have allowed myself sometimes the

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<sup>155</sup> C. Bell, *Landmarks in Nineteenth-Century Painting* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), p.21.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.vii.

pleasure of pointing out ‘Wombell Hall, the seat of Edmeads Esq.,’ or ‘Sir H. Oxenden’s at Broom.’<sup>157</sup>

The framing of a discussion of nineteenth century painting as a journey and Bell’s presentation of himself as a “road-map maker” or “topographer” is further driven home by his reference to “Messers Tombleson of Paternoster Row.” Tombleson was William Tombleson, an English landscape and architecture drawer, copper and steel engraver, author and printmaker active in London between 1795 and 1835. In *An Account of French Painting* (1931) Bell suggests the manuscript was written “because the notion of writing was put into my head by friends, some of whom were good enough to say that they would like to have me for a guide to the exhibition; and if I am vain enough to believe that it has merits beyond those of Baedeker.”<sup>158</sup> The preface reads very much like a guide book or letter sent while travelling in the way it offers a meditation on what it means to ‘be French.’ The following excerpt shows Bell’s identification with traditional travelogue narratives:

...these peculiarities will doubtless prove to be the expression of something more fundamental still--something that makes us exclaim "How French!" before a shop-window in Paris or as we watch a midinette pulling on her hat. I remember sitting in the Café Royal and observing a young man who had come in alone and sat himself down on the opposite side of the room. Evidently he was going to catch a train as soon as he had dined, for he had put his bag beside him and across his bag a rug, and on these he had so balanced a folded coat as to form a table on which to arrange with deliberate but easy neatness his hat, his stick, his novel and his gloves. With one voice my companion and I exclaimed-"He's French!" He was, we surmised, a commercial traveller, and in his easy, well considered neatness we found a manifestation of the mysterious quality. Here is Frenchness at its lowest and most banal. Go now to the middle of the Place Vendôme, if you dare, and see it--this quality--in all its glory still joining hands with the commercial traveller. Stand before a Poussin, a Watteau, a Chardin, a Corot or a Cézanne, and you will see it--the quality--transmuted to something infinitely subtle, exquisitely delicate and fine; but in the background, sure enough, there is the commercial traveller with his easy, neat way of dealing with facts: the divers manifestations still touch hands.<sup>159</sup>

This paragraph communicates more than any other how discussions by Bell and others about art, people and important locations were grounded in the experience of travel and of seeing the originals at first hand. For Clive Bell photographic reproductions represented a mode of travel for both himself and his intended party, the reader.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.v-vi

<sup>158</sup> C. Bell, *An Account of French Painting* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1931), p.1.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p.7.

## Vanessa Bell's Verbal Sketches- Wielding the Pen like a Brush

Descriptions of people and places by members of Bloomsbury have previously been connected to photographic conventions. Maggie Humm notes that Virginia Woolf “...match[ed] her growing photographic skills with written visual “snapshots” [in] early diaries...includ[ing] many short pieces of visual description.”<sup>160</sup> The aspect of Vanessa Bell's letters and writings related to travel that has not previously been explored is how clearly they show striking similarities and contrasts to those of her father, Leslie Stephen. Bell's attitudes towards travel and descriptions of the things she saw suggest she viewed the world with a photographic eye and this in turn influenced her work as an artist. Sometimes her letters also betray her identification with the act of tourism and her distaste for it. Above all the letters demonstrate how much the travel experience was a part of her identity as an artist and as an individual.

Bell previously travelled to France in November 1896 and Rome in April 1902. However it was her visit to France and Italy with her siblings Thoby, Virginia and Adrian, and step brother Gerald Duckworth following the death of Leslie Stephen in February 1904 that was the first to be described in detail through correspondence with family and friends. When not taking photographs of her travels Bell often provided descriptions of her surroundings so detailed that at times they almost appear photographic. In this they share a commonality with Leslie Stephen's verbal sketches of the Alps. This was particularly true when depicting places she stayed at while travelling. A letter written to her friend Margery Snowden in 1905 from Cornwall (a place the Stephen family holidayed for fourteen years from 1881 to 1895) demonstrates the painterly lens with which she viewed the world and exhibits similarities with Julia Margaret Cameron's descriptions of Malta to Tennyson.<sup>161</sup>

How I wish you could come here. The house is new and hideous and the furniture is of the worst lodging house description, but the place is most beautiful. You can't think how odd it is to come here after 10 years. There are some changes of course, but astonishingly we feel as if we had never been away. You can't imagine the colour of the sea here. It is quite like any other, and the country is altogether beautiful, very wild and bare. I mean to paint a great deal. I have established myself in my room much as we did in our hotels and to paint sunsets from the window. We

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<sup>160</sup> Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, p.5.

<sup>161</sup> Excerpt from Cameron's Letter to Tennyson, p. 38-39 of this chapter.

look out across the bay, the sun sets just behind the headland to the left, so that one gets most lovely effects on the sea...<sup>162</sup>

Bell also shows kinship with her father's attitude towards places which disinterested him and the ignorance of the tourists encountered. Written during a visit to Florence and Milan with her husband Clive and sister Virginia in September 1909 her letter to Lytton Strachey evidences all the elements notable in Leslie Stephen's correspondence from abroad. From its references to the disruptiveness of foreign tourists and their uneducated trawling of the same beaten track of sights the similarities are striking:

We had a very easy journey out, stopping one night in Milan, and here we are in a palatial room about as big as both the drawing rooms at Gordon Squire... As we came along in the train a row of naked boys saluted us. We travelled out with an unbelievable English party, one Dr. Lunn, Sarah and Alfred, a middle-aged couple with a dutiful niece and another young lady. We had secured the corners, so they had to sit bolt upright all night. Alfred sat next to me, pressing me tightly into my corner with his waterproof jacket. He lit matches at intervals to see the time and rattled mysterious papers. Can you imagine what it was like after spending the night so, when at about 3 am, they decided to have breakfast and produced from a basket oranges, eggs and shortbread? Here the German's are worse than the English and I realise the horrors of a German invasion when they plant their fat backs between me and the Botticelli's [Uffizi] which are really the most beautiful pictures in the world.<sup>163</sup>

Bell's travel letters reveal an interest in interior spaces, decoration and architectural detail which betrays an artistic sensibility absent in her father's travel narratives. An example of her interest in interior spaces appears in a letter written to Duncan Grant. She tells him of her journey there and describes in great detail the interior of The Grange and her plans for it:

It all looked so neat and prim. The walls are grey, the paint white. All is very clean and thin and tidy and there is none of the lovely colour of the lodging house. The curtains and covers are irreproachably negative. Colour is successfully killed. The two sitting-rooms are so well furnished and spotless that I saw one couldn't possibly make a mess with paints in them. However this morning I have cheered up. Tidiness is soon done away with, after all...I am now established in my night nursery, which is a fairly light room. The walls have a paled striped paper and there is no furniture but a bed and two sets of drawers. There is a balcony on which I am sitting now. I have my painting things up here and I think one can still live in a good light in the room or on the balcony, so that I can have this undisturbed as a

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<sup>162</sup> V. Bell to M. Snowden, 13 August 1905, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.35.

<sup>163</sup> V. Bell to L. Strachey, 28 April 1909, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.83. Regina Marler has identified 'Dr. Lunn' as Dr Henry Lunn (1859-39), a travel agent and founder of the Hellenic Travellers Club.

studio and a bedroom. It's a great blessing to have room to paint away from the rest of the company and there's plenty of room for you here too.<sup>164</sup>

While Leslie Stephen professed no interest in visiting anything other than mountains and old friends on his alpine excursions, Bell maintained it was of the utmost importance to visit local galleries and historic buildings as a source of inspiration for her work. Even if the journey or accommodation was substandard that was the major compensation as the following letter to her sister Virginia from Urbino in 1913 demonstrates:

...Here we are in the most horrible place, as I begin to see all mountain people and places are horrible. It is cold and raining. The people are dour and hostile. The hotel is dirty and everyone cheats...The best place we have been to was Ravenna, where I could have stayed happily for some time. We have bought large quantities of crockery, stuffs, etc., mostly to be sold at Fitzroy Sq. We also discovered a genius, a young man of exquisite beauty and charming smile, called Dante Paradiso, from whom Duncan bought two enormous painted wooden figures [at Charleston in the Studio]...Roger has commissioned him to do another, and boxes for the shop too!

You can imagine the activities and otherwise of the party. Roger is up with the lark, does many sketches, sees all the sights, and he and Clive are indefatigable in their attributions and historical discoveries. I can't say I listen to much, and after Padua I struck at sightseeing and now refuse to see more than one thing a day. I find Duncan sympathises with me and if he and I had the conduct of the party in our hands we should settle down somewhere for a month and spending most of our time loafing. Perhaps it's best we can't.

We have seen today one of the best pictures in the world, a very beautiful Piero della Francesca, so it has been worth coming here in spite of all the horrors...<sup>165</sup>

From this letter we can see that travelling for Vanessa Bell, as it was Clive Bell, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry, had an important function beyond providing artistic inspiration. Unlike typical tourists, they were went away with a clear interest in finding objects and materials that could be sold or painted and duplicated to sell at the Omega Workshops at 33 Fitzroy Square, London. This was a commercial venture initiated by Roger Fry with Bell and Grant being involved from its inception in 1913 to its closure in 1919. Travelling was seen as a way of encountering new techniques and objects which could potentially be re-interpreted and marketed to an English audience.

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<sup>164</sup> V. Bell to D. Grant, 6 August 1915, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.184.

<sup>165</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 3 May 1913, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 139.

Written following the end of the First World War a letter from Vanessa Bell to Roger Fry describes another function of travelling for Bell and Grant, that of establishing and re-establishing connections with the artistic community outside England. Dating from 1920 and sent from Rome the letter shows Bell's excitement at being on the move again after living quietly at Charleston and occasionally visiting London through the war years:

It's very exciting to be in Italy again! I wish you were here too. I was excited enough at being in Paris or in fact across the channel. One is always convinced that one must live in France when one gets there. So many things that have to be repressed in one seem to expand and develop when one gets into France again – but will one ever? I only had one crowded day in Paris. Duncan and I walked the streets looking at pictures in the shop windows, also we went to Gillaume's and saw the large Derain last supper... Then we went on to a show of nudes Rose told us about with a magnificent nude by Matisse, really splendid. There we met O'Connor, who was very friendly. I think his life has been changed by your influence...by amazing good luck we have hired a studio. We were told on all hands that none were to be got – not even a room of any kind - that it was as bad as Paris or London. But we got in touch with the director of the British Academy, an atrocious sculptor but a very kind little man, who persuaded a signorina to turn out of her studio for us.<sup>166</sup>

In the post-war years travelling abroad for Bell and Grant became more a matter of settlement. After 1921 Vanessa Bell took the lease on houses in St Tropez, first La Maison Blanche a villa belonging to Rose Vildrac and in 1928 La Bergère in Fontcreuse near Cassis. After living relatively quietly through the War, Bell and Grant travelled in earnest and, as Regina Marler editor of Vanessa Bell's letters notes, Bell's correspondence at this time is full of the joys of European cuisine. The following letter dating from 1946 and sent from Dieppe to her and Grant's daughter Angelica makes this plain:

...they gave us one of the most heavenly lunches I have ever had. First melon – that was nothing outside of the way. The veal was done in the most succulent and delicious juice with carrots, with a perfect puree of potatoes and beans – done I should think with butter and cream. Masses of butter. Delicious butter, and bread to eat too and wine of course. Then pears cooked quite simply with a sour milk or cream with them and masses of fresh cream. Perhaps it doesn't sound very much out of the way, but the veal was so well done and so were the vegetables that one felt as if one hadn't tasted such cooking for years.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> V. Bell to R. Fry, 24 March 1920, reproduced in Marler (ed.) *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 238.

<sup>167</sup> V. Bell to A. Garnett, 17 September 1946, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 508.

A similar pattern emerged after the limited travel opportunities during the Second World War. A 1949 letter Bell sent from Paris to her daughter Angelica describes the effects of the aftermath of the war from a largely artistic perspective. The letter betrays her personal sadness when visiting places that would never be the same again.

...We made our way to the Leaning Tower which would be lovely if it didn't lean and to the baptistery and all there seemed untouched. But when we got to the Campo Santo which used to have wonderful frescos on the walls round the enclosed space it was really horrifying. The old man in charge told us that the Americans and Germans had fought each other in the air over it. It was the evening of a very hot day and everything was very dry and the lead on the roof very hot. Shells set fire to it and the roof all the way collapsed and the lead melted – one could see where it had run. But the most extraordinary thing has happened to the frescos. They had nearly all been destroyed but they left behind the drawings underneath. Apparently the painters – one by Giotto he said and some by Lorenzetti and others – did very elaborate but very free drawings first on the wall. Then they covered them bit by bit with fresh plaster and painted on each bit. So now one can see a good many of the original drawings which were fascinating. It is odd to think they never would have been seen again if it hadn't been for the Germans and Americans fighting over them. Still of course the destruction is appalling and lots have vanished completely...<sup>168</sup>

The above letters indicate much about Vanessa Bell's concerns as a traveller. Opinions that are strikingly similar to her father's, such as frustration with the ignorance of sightseers and the habits of fellow travellers, can be seen as public concerns because they involve the generalities of making journeys and interacting with people in a public setting. Private concerns on the other hand, relate to things thought passionately about on an interior and intrinsic level. Private concerns speak loudly in the letters; for Leslie Stephen it is the Alps, for Vanessa Bell it is art and architecture. Travelling for Bell and Stephen involved an intertwining of public and private identities. They experienced travel on a purely personal level but also had public personae. Stephen recorded many of his experiences for publication, and Bell was always looking for new techniques and objects to add to her portfolio as an artist and as a business woman for the Omega Workshops. Most importantly travel allowed Bell and Grant to establish and re-establish connections with the artistic community in Europe.

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<sup>168</sup> V. Bell to A. Garnett, 5 October 1949, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 523.



## Vanessa Bell's Early Travel Photography (1896-1902)

When long ago the Alps cast their spell upon me, it was woven in a great degree by the eloquence of Modern Painters. I hoped to share Ruskin's ecstasies in a reverent worship of Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn. The influence of any cult, however, depends upon the character of the worshipper, and I fear that in this case the charm operated rather perversely. It stimulated a passion for climbing which absorbed my energies and distracted me from the prophet's loftier teaching. I might have followed him from the mountains to picture galleries, and spent among the stones of Venice hours which I devoted to attacking hitherto unascended peaks and so losing my last chance of becoming an art critic. I became a fair judge of an Alpine guide, but I do not even know how to make a judicious allusion to Botticelli or Tintoretto. I can't say I feel the slightest remorse.<sup>169</sup> – Leslie Stephen “In Praise of Walking.” (1901)

It was perhaps inevitable that my father and I should not have had many interests in common, for life apart from human beings was almost completely visual for me, while he never entered a gallery, had never in his life been tempted to go down from the alps into Italy. But we might have found more common ground in our feelings for people if it had not been for the unfortunate strain of the weekly books.<sup>170</sup> – Vanessa Bell “Life at Hyde Park After 1897.” (Circa 1941)

Bell's early travel photography betrays certain personal photographic conventions that demonstrate a distinct departure from earlier modes of image-making. Many of Bell's personal photographic conventions suggest an active intersection or inter-relation between her work as an artist and as a photographer. Bell viewed the camera as an extension of her artistic vision, and her view of the world was a constantly changing interplay between colour, line and form. She had a distaste for technical proficiency as a lecture given to her son Quentin's class at Leighton Park School in 1925 confirms:

...I am certain – and this is my heresy – that in art skill is of no importance. When I say skill I mean skill of hand, mechanical skill...I think it is more likely to be a hindrance than a help...skill means that your hand has acquired certain habits and habits of hand tend to destroy what is most important to an artist – sensibility.<sup>171</sup>

The above assertion makes clear that for Bell what was important to her in both her art and photography was the unexpected rather than the predictable, capturing movement rather than stasis. It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of her personal

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<sup>169</sup> L. Stephen, from ‘Studies of a Biographer, iii’, p. 268, reproduced in Maitland (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, p.81.

<sup>170</sup> V. Bell, ‘Life at Hyde Park after 1897’, reproduced in Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, p.73.

<sup>171</sup> V. Bell, ‘Lecture given at Leighton Park School’, reproduced in Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, p.161.

photographs were taken when she, her family and friends were physically on the move, whether travelling abroad or engaged in activities at home. Bell's travel photography was not confined within the parameters of a photographic type but moved freely between categories and captured the world as it moved around and she moved with it. This section explores how Bell 'pictured' photographically the places she travelled to and demonstrates the development of Bell's artistic eye through the photographic lens.

Vanessa Bell's photograph albums now in the Tate Gallery Archive, London, provide an interesting parallel to images collected by her and Duncan Grant's parents' generation. The photographs are placed in nine albums and contain over four hundred images. Bell was a keen photographer of people and her surroundings both at home and abroad. We can identify as Bell's formative travel photography images dating from 1896 to 1902. During this period Bell was aged seventeen to twenty three and the development of her artistic vision is clearly discernible in her photographs. There are similarities between the images of travel produced by professional Victorian photographers as well as clear differences. Bell's early travel related photographs established a foundation for Bell's personal set of photographic conventions that she began to develop from 1896.

The similarities between Bell's early travel photography and images made and collected by earlier generations of her family are thematic. There are for example visual correspondences between Victorian images of working people that were popular among travellers and tourists and Bell's continued photographing, from childhood to adulthood, of her servants and local labourers at Charleston, her homes in London, and holiday homes in the New Forest and her rented houses south of France (Figures 54-56).

Bell, much like earlier generations of image collectors in the Bell and Grant families, shows herself a keen observer of what has been termed previously the traditional dress photograph, though Bell's photographs depict figures in the context of their surroundings rather than isolated to capture a photographic moment. Much like the *carte de visites* from Stockholm and Imola, Bell's photographs of a trip to France in November 1896 depict local markets and architecture.<sup>172</sup> These images differ from their Victorian counterparts in their interest in the urban streetscape. Bourne's 'Views of

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<sup>172</sup> See Figures 48-50.

India' focused on suggesting the movement and natural force of nature (Figure 38). Bell's personal snapshots indicate the movement of people. Her photographs picture people loitering at landmarks and climbing to the top of buildings, conversing at town centres, or incidentally engaging with her camera (Figures 55-57). The most deliberate image demonstrating this interest in movement and indeed an entirely modern travel photograph is that of the landscape of Portofino taken from a train window in April 1902 (Figure 58). To some degree Bell's freedom of movement can be connected to the increasing visibility of women in metropolitan centres by the early 1900s. Meaghan Clarke suggests in "Sex and the City: The Metropolitan New Women" that women were "active participants in the developing pleasure and leisure economy of the modern city... moving about the city via new modes of transport – bicycle, bus, Underground and automobile – and experiencing the greater mobility the city could offer."<sup>173</sup> In 1896 aged seventeen Vanessa Bell had experienced this freedom of movement cycling from the family home at Hyde Park Gate, Kensington, to Arthur Cope's art school nearby at Park Cottage, Pelham Street.<sup>174</sup>

Another sign of modernity in these photographs is that they do not shy away from depicting the hurly burly of travel, harbours and docksides beyond the gentility of luxury liners, luncheons and grand interiors (Figures 59-62). Duncan Grant was also interested in these signposts of modernity as Raymond Mortimer noted in 1944 in his introduction to a text on Grant for the *Penguin Modern Painters* series: "Duncan Grant, like most painters, is fascinated by the vehement life of great cities, the jostle of crowds in pubs and *bistros*, the waterfronts of ports like Toulon and Marseilles."<sup>175</sup>

Pamela Gerrish Nunn questions where women artists, including Bell fit into the development of modernism due to the fact that "there are next to no railways, shops, marketplaces or factories, no common streets or battle scenes in these artists' repertoires."<sup>176</sup> It can be argued that many of these subjects are represented in Vanessa

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<sup>173</sup> M. Clarke, 'Sex and the City: The Metropolitan New Woman', in *The Camden Town Group in Context*, ed by H. Bonett, Y. Holt and J. Mundy (eds.), May 2012, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/meaghan-clarke-sex-and-the-city-the-metropolitan-new-woman-r1105659> [accessed 9 July 2014].

<sup>174</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 18.

<sup>175</sup> R. Mortimer, *Duncan Grant*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1944), p.7.

<sup>176</sup> P.G. Nunn, *From Victorian to Modern: Innovation and Tradition in the Work of Vanessa Bell, Gwen John and Laura Knight* (London: Phillip Wilson Publishers, 2006), p.66.

Bell's early photography and that a sense of movement, both the physical act of travel and capturing the moving world through the camera lens, was an agent and aid to her engagement with questions of modernism and her development as an artist.

## Photographic Experiments

Bell's early experiments with photographic lighting are demonstrated in a series of portraits taken during a family visit to Hindhead House, Haslemere, in September 1896. In these images the Stephen siblings, Vanessa, Virginia and Adrian, attempt to find the ideal light and focus for a half-length portrait in front of a window which is left uncovered, half covered and covered (Figures 63-64). Framing techniques were also practiced in doorways and windows during visits to holiday houses at home and abroad (Figures 65-68). Bell's interest in shapes, particularly those related to architecture, can be seen as a precursor of her later forays into abstraction in her painting.<sup>177</sup> Photographs of this type include the summer house at Hindheard House where the structure appears almost geometric against the surrounding sky and vegetation (Figure 69).

Other exterior images of the gardens at the Villa d'Este in Italy reiterate Bell's early appreciation of capturing movement and monumentality in the photographic frame (Figures 70-71). These photographs from Bell's formative period as a photographer and artist show a deliberate interest in creating artistically interesting photographs by placing figures in poses and postures that are neither formulaic like the Victorian *carte de visite* nor naturally posed. The artifice in the photographs is clearly the photographer's intention. Bell's images of her step-sister Stella Duckworth and her fiancé Jack Hills are notable for their interest in capturing the subjects frontally and from behind (Figure 72). Equal attention is paid to the uniformity of pose, and figurative arrangement in *The Milmans* down to the placement of each person's arms at their sides (Figure 73).<sup>178</sup>

A less uniform, but equally engaging image is that of Virginia and Adrian Stephen sitting on top of a gate wall during a visit to the Manor House, Ringwood, between

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<sup>177</sup> A notable painted counterpoint is Bell's *The Haystacks, Asheham*, 1912, oil on board, 60.3 x 67.6 cm, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton Massachusetts.

<sup>178</sup> Sylvia Frances Milman had met Vanessa Bell while they were both students at the Slade. She later became a member of the Friday Club, an exhibiting society formed by Bell in 1905. She is pictured with her sisters Ida, Enid and Maud.

August and September 1898. Placement of the figures at different angles and heights again points to an artistic way of seeing and an individual way of picturing people in their surrounding environment (Figure 74). Echoes of this positioning of sitters can be found in Bell's later photographs, including an image of Roger Fry perched on chair on a wall at Durbins his Guilford home in 1914 (Figure 75). Bell's interest in setting her photographs out of doors, and capturing the natural landscape is evident throughout the fifty plus years her personal photograph albums trace. In contrast, the majority of Victorian photographs in the Charleston Collection that are set out of doors, whether in a real or fictional sense show an interest in the natural world as a force to be tamed and controlled or muted to act as a backdrop to a portrait composition. Significantly Julia Margaret Cameron though interested in the natural world did not often draw upon this inspiration in her own photographic work.<sup>179</sup> Cameron is known to have taken at least one landscape photograph of a waterfall in Ceylon where she and her husband returned to live in 1875. Of the few subjects she captured out of doors one was her favourite sitter, her widowed niece Julia Princep Duckworth later Stephen (Figure 76).

Most of Bell's photographs on the other hand are set outside and shaped by personal conventions that she continued to use throughout her career. Many images show sitters in an almost secondary role to nature. One example is a photograph of Thoby and Adrian Stephen with family dogs Shag and Spry where they are almost dwarfed by the wild tangle of a field (Figure 77). In another photograph a driver, horse, cart and dog are kept to the rear of the photograph while the primary focus is on the wide expanse of water where they are situated (Figure 78). This image is also of interest because Bell appears to have been caught in the reflection on the water.

Bell's early photographs also show the beginning of her life-long interest in creating a countryside idyll in both her photography and painting. Early photographs indicative of this strand in Bell's photography are interestingly situated in locations where Bell and her family were on holiday. Restful photographic landscapes combine with a quaint pictorial travelogue of a period spent in Ringwood depicting typical countryside images, the mill, the church, the quiet high street (Figures 79-80). The desire to depict the countryside in this way is a continuing theme in Bell's photography and represents a movement away from the modes of photographic image making and presentation which

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<sup>179</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.19.

had, with the exception of the work of Julia Margaret Cameron, dominated her youth as she was to note in a lecture given to a group of students many years later:

When I was quite young, living in a house full of Victorian sentiment and family photographs in plush frames fired me one day with a desire to reform. I seized those photographs, a few of them, huddled together behind draperies and flowers in the darkest corner of a dark room. I decided that many were hideous and should be banished and that others should be framed in something pleasanter to behold and more hygienic than plush – (Do you know what plush is? I can't describe it if you don't) Well I carried out my reform. I did so in secret, in fear and trembling, hoping that the literary powers would be blind to this and so much else. But no. They noticed and I was condemned as a heartless desecrator of the most sacred sentiments of family.<sup>180</sup>

## Conclusion

The assimilation of new material into an existing collection is always a difficult task, particularly when it seems so at odds with the personal and working conventions of the people it is connected to. The above quotation makes plain Vanessa Bell's abhorrence at what she viewed as the heightened sentimentality of the previous generation and her sense of disconnectedness from the conventions that produced it. Bell and Grant's daughter Angelica assessed the tensions that existed for the two artists as follows:

Both Duncan and Vanessa had been brought up – though Vanessa more so – in the shadow of late Victorianism, and each had rejected, or thought they had, the values of their parents. In each case this was a compromise, but there was also a profound difference of attitude: while Vanessa swallowed her father's atheism and rationalism whole, she felt herself rejected and rejected him emotionally. Duncan however continued to love and respect his parents, while refusing to fall in with their conventionality...He could afford to be a lover of tradition, both social and artistic, whereas Vanessa's sophisticated background imposed obligations that were both more lofty and more confused.<sup>181</sup>

This chapter has demonstrated that a great deal of Victorian photography in the form of portraits in plush frames, cartes de visite and cabinet images, sublime alpine landscapes and exotic views of the colonial empire resulted from ongoing physical and emotional linkages between photography, art and travel and, at the heart, depicted what modern life looked like. These exchanges between photographer and artist, traveller and place, and artist and photograph contained within them a host of appropriations and

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<sup>180</sup> V. Bell, 'Lecture Given at Leighton Park School', reproduced in Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, p.154.

<sup>181</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.16.

oppositions to the conventions that preceded them. In turn Bell, Grant and other artists of their generation chose to appropriate and/or oppose Victorian conventions in order to fashion something new.

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## CHAPTER TWO: IN THE PUBLIC EYE, AN EXAMINATION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTIONS IN THE CHARLESTON COLLECTION AND CRITICAL RESPONSES TO BLOOMSBURY INCORPORATING PHOTOGRAPHY

I really don't know how to describe the pictures here. They are simply gorgeous. Tintoretto is the greatest. One gets no idea of him in London or anywhere else I have been to, but here the churches and galleries are full of him. His finest pictures are enormous things. There's a huge crucifixion which takes up the whole of one wall that is quite splendid, and there are several others. I shall bring back some photographs to show you as it's useless to try and describe them.<sup>182</sup>

The above letter excerpt was written by Vanessa Bell to her close friend and Slade classmate Margery Snow in 1904 during Bell's trip to France and Italy with her siblings Thoby, Virginia, Adrian and step brother Gerald Duckworth following the death of Leslie Stephen in February of that year. It is the breathless narrative of someone encountering *in situ* paintings or architecture of unsurpassing beauty quality or scale for the first time. Certainly it captures Bell's excitement at being away and possibly a sense of relief at now being free from looking after her aged father and indeed the entire household at 22 Hyde Park Gate, the family home in Kensington, London. The Stephen household had become increasingly gloomy and oppressive following the premature death of Julia Stephen at the age of forty-nine in 1895. Here is the voice of a traveller but also that of a strong and opinionated individual and artist.

The letter is one of many in a lifetime of correspondence with family and friends describing in detail what she was seeing on her travels and how it was impacting upon her artistic sensibilities. Of interest here is her mention of "bringing back photographs" believing that descriptions cannot do justice to the experience both seeing paintings and decoration in their original context and seeing works different to those studied endlessly in the galleries and museums of London.<sup>183</sup> Bell may also have seen the potential for using the photographs in relation to her own work given her strong appreciation for Tintoretto during both the early and later stages of her career.<sup>184</sup> The photographic

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<sup>182</sup> V. Bell to M. Snowdon, 6 April 1904, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 13.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 41.



reproduction provided in many ways for Bell and Grant a visual prompt, a method of working out, very much like Bell's way of viewing the world as her daughter Angelica Garnett explained:

It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent to which she lived through her eyes and concomitantly through her visual memory. A continuous tapestry of painting seemed to unroll itself at the back of her mind, sparking off analogies with the immediate sights that surrounded her. In desultory cafe conversation she might point out to Duncan a lady wearing a blue scarf which reminded her of a particular blue in a portrait by Ingres or David, and this would lead to a discussion of blue and the emotions aroused by it, ending inevitably by saying how French it was, a blue unattainable in England since the days of Gainsborough!<sup>185</sup>

This chapter addresses the role of the photographic reproduction in Bell and Grant's working lives and the nature of media coverage incorporating photography of Bell, Grant and other Bloomsbury artists and writers. Throughout this thesis the life and work of Bell's great aunt Julia Margaret Cameron provides a constant reference point. Bell felt strongly connected to her matrilineal heritage and Cameron's images were a primary source of inspiration in both her painted and photographic work. As a woman juggling public/private personal/professional life, Cameron's experiences offer a template for Bell's own experience as an artist and photographer. Julia Margaret Cameron's frequent reference to photographic reproductions in relation to her photography and her feelings regarding media scrutiny of her work offer an interesting counterpoint to Bell's impressions in this regard.

### **Public Declarations of Artistic Alignment and Exchange in the Photography of Julia Margaret Cameron**

The photography studios discussed in Chapter One tied photography to the arts on the back of the carte de visites proclaiming the images to be the work of "photographic artists" and "artist photographers." Cameron too was a strident proponent of photography's equal status with art and it has been argued that Cameron and other photographers of the time followed the conventions of painting and literature in order to demonstrate this assertion.<sup>186</sup> References to Italian and Dutch masters like Giotto and

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<sup>185</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.89.

<sup>186</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.167.

Raphael, Titan and Rembrandt are evident in her work (Figures 82-83).<sup>187</sup> Indeed, Cameron not only created photographic images but worked on them, scratching and engraving lines on negatives and painting the collodion. Julian Cox compares this doctoring to the preparatory sketches that an artist completes before embarking on a painted composition (Figure 81).<sup>188</sup>

In the numerous albums Julia Margaret Cameron assembled for family and friends she often included photographic reproductions of artworks that inspired her, particularly those of associates of her sister Sara Princep's salon at Little Holland House, including George Frederick Watts and William Holman Hunt. These were presented alongside her own photographs and those of other contemporary photographers.<sup>189</sup> The second album that Cameron assembled is known as the *Mia Album*, presented as it was to her favourite sister Maria (Vanessa Bell's grandmother) in 1863. It included two reproductions of portraits by G.F Watt's of Cameron and her other sister Virginia.<sup>190</sup>

Cameron was also a subscriber to the Arundel Society, also known as the Society For Promoting The Knowledge Of Art By Copying and Publishing Important Works of Ancient Masters.<sup>191</sup> Founded in 1848 and active until 1897, members included John Ruskin, Holman Hunt and G.F. Watts. The Society aimed to "preserve the record and diffuse a knowledge of the most important remains of painting and sculpture, to furnish valuable contributions towards the illustration of the history of Art, to elevate the standard of taste in England, and thus incidentally to exert a beneficial influence upon our native and national schools of painting and sculpture."<sup>192</sup> These reproductions were made by a number of methods including completion of preparatory drawings from the original artworks to be completed later, and watercolours and tracings made from the

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<sup>187</sup> C. Ford, *Julia Margaret Cameron - 19<sup>th</sup> Century Photographer of Genius* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2003), p. 70.

<sup>188</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.52.

<sup>189</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.141.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> 'Arundel Society: The Society for Promoting the Knowledge of Art by Copying and Publishing Important Works of Ancient Masters', (London: Arundel Society, 1892), <http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924101884017#page/n5/mode/2up>

<sup>192</sup> V. Button, 'The Arundel Society – Techniques in the Art of Copying', *Conservation Journal*, Issue 23, 1997, p.16.

original.<sup>193</sup> The Society distributed chromolithographic prints of Italian Masters, though there was a later option for members to purchase seven photographic images of “Sepulchral Monuments of Italy” singularly or as a set and photographs of two Tintoretto paintings introduced by John Ruskin.<sup>194</sup> Though the Society later disbanded due to the increasing interest of commercial photography studios in producing photographic reproductions for purchase by the general public it is possible that reproductions of the Elgin Marbles circulated by the Arundel Society influenced Cameron in two photographic compositions dating from 1867, namely *Teachings from the Elgin Marbles* and *Version of Study after the Manner of the Elgin Marbles* (Figure 84). These photographs were made available in reduced size formats for commercial consumption.<sup>195</sup> It is also notable that of the two dealers, Colnaghi and William Spooner, Cameron selected to sell her work, Colnaghi was recognised as a leading purveyor of reproductions of art works in photographs and in print.<sup>196</sup>

In exploring how Cameron’s work is related to the concept of travel we can include images that were carried beyond the bounds of the family album. Cameron’s images became travel photography because she physically took them with her when she travelled. In her 1923 parody *Freshwater: A Comedy*, Virginia Woolf poked fun at this idea, having her Great-Aunt taking her photographs on board the voyage to Ceylon “to give to the sailors.”<sup>197</sup> She had in reality tipped the porters at Southampton with photographs when her money ran out on the journey from the Isle of Wight.<sup>198</sup> A contemporary account by William Allingham also described Cameron taking her photographs from place to place. Having met her on a train en route to the Isle of Wight he noted she was “queenly in a carriage by herself surrounded by her photographs.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>194</sup> Arundel Society: The Society for Promoting the Knowledge of Art by Copying and Publishing Important Works of Ancient Masters.

<sup>195</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, pp.83-84.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p.96.

<sup>197</sup> V. Woolf, *Freshwater: A Comedy* ed by L.P. Ruotolo (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1923), p.19.

<sup>198</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.4.

<sup>199</sup> W. Allingham, *William Allingham: A Diary*, ed by H. Allingham and D. Radford, (London: Macmillan, 1907), in Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs* p.28.

As well as making the most of her personal connections in literary and artistic circles, Cameron also courted the interest of prominent figures in the art world by gifting albums of her images corresponding to the interests of the persons for whom they were intended. Sir. Coutts Lindsay, later founder of the Grosvenor Gallery was one such recipient.<sup>200</sup> These albums, most probably produced as advertisements for her larger scale works, included cabinet photographs and cartes de visites and have been referred to by Phillipa Wright as ‘portable galleries.’<sup>201</sup> The connotations of travel attached to this term also situate Cameron’s work within a conceptual framework of travel photography. It was a relatively small number of photographs that Cameron chose to collate into albums and sell individually in carte de visite and cabinet sizes (approximately one-fifth). It is likely Cameron had the images printed by a commercial photographer in possession of a cabinet or carte de visite camera. Again the reference to travelling photographic images is implied in this process since it is likely that Cameron personally oversaw the printing of her work in reduced form, travelling to a commercial photographer’s studio to do so.<sup>202</sup> Cameron’s engagement with cabinet and carte de visite photographs in relation to her own work, particularly her decision to have prints made in this format of her most popular images including her portraits of Julia Jackson (later Duckworth-Stephen) and her ‘Great Men,’ series demonstrates both her astute understanding of the commercial photographic market and the need to capitalise on the growing interest of the general public in obtaining photographic images in an affordable form. Additionally, she sought to expand her market by offering her work in a number of different forms.

Julia Margaret Cameron’s efforts to establish her work in national museum collections began almost from the inception of her career. Always ready to seize potential opportunities to raise her professional profile Cameron took advantage of the burgeoning institutional interest in photography and donated her series of allegorical images of religious virtues to the British Museum.<sup>203</sup> The South Kensington Museum, eager to become a leading photography resource under the direction of Henry Cole, had photographers on staff and swiftly incorporated photographs of the collection into the

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<sup>200</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography* pp. 143,179.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>202</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.84.

<sup>203</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.173.

Circulation Department to be lent or sold. These photographs were sometimes hung beside the objects and painted images they depicted. Cameron's work entered the Museum's collection in 1865 with the purchase of eighty images including *La Madonna Esaltata* (1865) (Figure 85). She responded by gifting a further thirty-four photographs to the Museum all of which were "widely displayed and circulated."<sup>204</sup> Henry Cole also made provision of two rooms in the Museum for Cameron to use as portrait studio.<sup>205</sup>

Cameron's determination to succeed was evident from the very start of her career. In 1865 she mounted a one woman show at the P. & D. Colnaghi Gallery in Bond Street, London, at her own expense with her maid as gallery assistant.<sup>206</sup> At her first selling exhibition at the French Gallery, London, in November 1865, she gave advantage to those purchasers who were artists first. Cameron confirmed this belief in a letter to close friend Jane Senior during another exhibition in June of the same year at the Colnaghi Gallery: "I have a long time ago told Colnaghi that all artists were to have my prints at half price."<sup>207</sup> In his study of Cameron's photographs Colin Ford has proposed that Cameron's motivation for doing this was related to a desire to place her work into the hands of figures of influence.<sup>208</sup> The ploy was evidently successful with Pre- Raphaelite associate George Price Boyce purchasing five images at the discounted price.<sup>209</sup> Cameron was similarly professional in her approach to exhibition organisation, providing interpretative leaflets and price lists for potential purchasers. She commonly arranged her work in groupings often labelled for reference in her leaflets as "*Portraits, Madonna Groups and Fancy Subjects for Pictorial Effect.*" *Fancy Subjects* referred to "subjects of a literary, religious or mythological nature."<sup>210</sup> To encourage fresh interest Cameron also rotated the photographs she had on view.<sup>211</sup> Perhaps the most distinguished purchaser of Cameron's work was Queen Victoria who acquired prints of *Paul and Virginia* (1864) and *Whisper of the Muse* (1865) following Cameron's

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p.177.

<sup>205</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.25.

<sup>206</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.182

<sup>207</sup> J.M. Cameron to J. Senior, 29 June 1865, National Media Museum

<sup>208</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p. 41.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

exhibition at the Colnaghi Gallery in 1865.<sup>212</sup> Cameron's ambitions stretched far beyond London's galleries. She sent images and was accepted to exhibit across Europe, America and Australia and was awarded prizes in national and international photography competitions.<sup>213</sup> In this manner Cameron's images travelled far and wide making them another variant on travel photography.

Cameron consistently sought ways to increase exposure of her work to the public and her reputation. For example, she expanded into photographic illustration for two of the most famous pieces of literature of the Victorian period: Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel of the House" (1854) and Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" (1875). Bob Cotton has suggested that the two versions of Tennyson's "Idylls" in which Tennyson's words were handwritten by Cameron and paired with her photographs was the first of its kind.<sup>214</sup> She also took advantage of public interest in current events rushing out portrait photographs of Prince Dejach Alamayou, orphan of King Theodore II of Abyssinia, in the wake of the Abyssinian War in 1868<sup>215</sup> (Figure 86). Three years earlier she had asked Tennyson to sign dozens of photographs of her large-scale portrait of him known as *The Dirty Monk* knowing that his celebrity status would ensure sales. Similarly she occasionally sold her images at a reduced price to figures of influence, as was the case with a series of twenty photographs sold to the American publisher J. Fields in 1873.<sup>216</sup>

The following anonymous quotation from the August 1864 issue of the *Photographic Journal* suggests the uphill struggle Cameron faced as a woman stepping away from her private domestic life as a wife and mother into the professional realm:

Mrs Cameron exhibits her series of out-of-focus portraits of celebrities. We must give this lady credit for daring originality, but at the expense of all other photographic qualities. A true artist would employ all the resources at his disposal in whatever branch of art he might practise. In these pictures, all that is good in photography has been neglected, and the shortcomings of the art are prominently

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<sup>212</sup> S. Gordon, *Julia Margaret Cameron, Roger Fenton: Early British photographs from the Royal Collection* (London: Royal Collections Enterprises, 2010), p.13.

<sup>213</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.83.

<sup>214</sup> B. Cotton, *Julia Margaret Cameron & The Allure of Photography* (Freshwater: Dimbola Books, 2013), p.54.

<sup>215</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.213.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p.227.

exhibited. We are sorry to speak severely on the works of a lady, but we feel compelled to do so in the interests of art.<sup>217</sup>

Part if not all of the review was based on the Victorian belief that to be a public woman was to be disreputable. Cameron responded angrily to the editors when she felt reviews had been unnecessarily harsh.<sup>218</sup> She made it clear that it was her unconventional technique that marked her out from other photographers as her 1874 letter to Edward Ryan makes explicit:

“as to spots they must I think remain. I could have them touched out but I am the only photographer who always issues untouched photographs and artists for this reason amongst others value my photographs. So Mr. Watts, and Mr. Rossetti and Mr. De Maurier write me above all others.”<sup>219</sup>

Some reviews looked at Cameron’s work within the context of photography as a new medium that was still being explored. It is interesting to note how conceptions of travel and exploration similarly made their way into critical responses in the fields of art and photography. Another anonymous reviewer of Cameron’s 1864 exhibition clearly acknowledged Cameron’s role as a ground-breaking explorer stating: “...this lady has succeeded in entirely opening a field of photography that remained almost a *terra incognita*...It appears to us indisputable that a large proportion afford a pleasure differing not only in degree, but wholly in kind from that derived from ordinary photographs.”<sup>220</sup>

Despite the popularity of her work among the buying public and recognition from photography competitions at home and abroad the London art and photographic press remained largely divided on Cameron’s merit as a photographer. Her use of soft focus was continually pointed to as evidence of her lack of technical skill though in 1864 *The Photographic News* conceded that her images were “very daring in style...”<sup>221</sup> *The*

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<sup>217</sup> Anonymous, *Photographic Journal*, 15 August 1864, pp.86-8, in Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.83.

<sup>218</sup> Anonymous, ‘Review’, *Photographic Journal*, 15 May 1886, in B. Hinton, *Immortal Faces: Julia Margaret Cameron on the Isle of Wight* (Newport: Isle of Wight County Press, 1992), p.66.

<sup>219</sup> J.M. Cameron to E. Ryan, 18 December 1874, Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.53.

<sup>220</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 15, July 1864, Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.viii.

<sup>221</sup> *Photographic News*, 3, June 1863, pp.265-266, in Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.153.

*British Journal of Photography* was similarly backhanded in its assessment, stating in 1865 that she had had far greater criticism than any of her contemporaries yet the problem remained that her work was hardly good enough to be exhibited.<sup>222</sup> The characterisation of Cameron's work by the *Illustrated London News* as images which "startle the artistic viewer with strange delight" follow on from other reviews which highlight the "strength" and "power" of her photographs, aspects which to most Victorian eyes were unfeminine and unwholesome but contrastingly remain the aspects most celebrated today.<sup>223</sup>

Through the reproduction of her images in a variety of forms and employment of the marketing strategies cited above, Cameron aimed to ensure that her photographs had global reach, remarking with conviction in her biographical sketch of 1874 *Annals of My Glass House*: "Mrs Cameron's Photography, now ten years old, has passed the age of lisping and stammering and may speak for itself, having travelled over Europe, America and Australia, and met with a welcome that has given it confidence and power."<sup>224</sup>

### **Photographic Reproductions in the Charleston Collection and Their Use by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant**

Reference photographs were an essential part of Vanessa Bell's and Duncan Grant's creative process. Together they amassed an archive of over five hundred commercially produced photographic images of paintings and sculptures from across the art historical spectrum, including works by their contemporaries and themselves. These photographs have previously been little discussed. By examining the images' relationship to Bell and Grant's experience as travellers, both in a public and private context, it is possible to reinforce the definition of travel photography as established in the first chapter to include these reproductions contained in the collection at Charleston, their home and working environment for more than fifty years.

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<sup>222</sup> *British Journal of Photography*, 19 May 1865, pp. 267-268, in Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.175.

<sup>223</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 15 July 1865, p. 50, in Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, pp.153, 176.

<sup>224</sup> Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House: Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, p.11.



The first section of this chapter examines reproductions that were obtained from museums, galleries, publishing companies and photographic studios in order to determine how important they were in Bell and Grant's creative process and as an aide-memoire of works seen during in their many visits to galleries throughout Europe.<sup>225</sup> In addition, this section explains the development of the photographic reproduction market and the role of artists in photography studios during the Victorian period and how galleries and museums, both in Britain and internationally, began to produce commercial photographic reproductions of their collections with a particular eye to the artist market.

The second part of this section considers the role of the modernist magazine *The Dial* in providing Bell and Grant access to photographic reproductions of the work of their contemporaries particularly through the "Living Art Portfolio" (1924). *The Dial* also provided an international forum for critical discussion of contemporary art and literature.

### **Commercially Produced Photographs from International Museums, Galleries Publishing Companies and Studios within the Charleston Collection**

Photographs and images produced commercially by museums, galleries and studios are by their very nature a type of 'travel photography.' Like the photographs of landscapes in India marketed by Samuel Bourne or Watts and Skeens' images of architecture and interiors of buildings related to colonial administration, studios and publishing companies produced images of famous works of art and architecture for public consumption in art publications as well as in series and as individual images.

These photographs provided not only a substitute for the original artwork and the physical journey to its location but also for artists a potential stimulus for a new journey, that of artistic creation. As points of reference or inspiration photographic reproductions are useful because they can illuminate areas of an artwork or architectural decoration that may not be easily visible. This may be due to general restrictions like height, inadequate light or restricted access. Walter Benjamin states that photography "...is able

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<sup>225</sup> Bell noted in a letter sent to Helen Anrep from Venice: "...I have developed a passion for cheap prints. I have to pretend they're for my *bambina*, but they're not, they're for me..." V. Bell to H. Anrep, Mid-May 1926, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 291.

to bring out aspects of the original that can be accessed only by the lens...it can also place the copy of the original in situations beyond the reach of the original itself.”<sup>226</sup> The detail is a good demonstration of this concept. A photographic detail of any work of art or sculpture enables the artist, scholar or critic to concentrate on the particular area they wish to discuss or which is providing inspiration. An example in the Charleston Collection is *The Coronation of the Virgin* (1452-53) by Enguerrand Charonton which demonstrates how photographic studios chose to crop artworks by means the photographic frame (Figures 87-88).

Bell and Grant’s extensive archive of reference photographs demonstrates how widely dispersed geographically the main museums, galleries and photographic companies producing the images were.<sup>227</sup> During this period there was increasing interest in photographic reproductions of paintings and sculpture to such an extent that some studios began to concentrate solely on the provision of fine art reproductions. The primary market for these photographs was artists who began to use them as points of reference. Artists have always reinterpreted established themes and created their own versions of works by other artists who inspired them but the use of photography in this process was a relatively recent addition to the artist’s arsenal. Photographic reproductions in the studio space were a thoroughly modern phenomenon. The walls of Cézanne’s studios were hung with “cheap, bad reproductions of his favourite artists, El Greco, Tintoretto, Titian, Delacroix, Courbet...”<sup>228</sup> A description of Bonnard’s studio is strikingly similar: “... right in the middle of his working area, he had neatly arranged and clearly exposed his inner admirations: Delacroix, Picasso, Vermeer, Monet, Seurat, Gauguin, classical sculpture, and even preferred Bonnard hung in a rich mixture of black, white and colour reproductions.”<sup>229</sup> A later French painter Jean Bezaine (1904-2001) had on the walls of his studio “reproductions of art masterpieces...several

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<sup>226</sup> W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), p.6.

<sup>227</sup> Where an individual photographer is unidentified, the studio or publishing company is listed for each image.

<sup>228</sup> A. Liberman, *The Artist in the Studio* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p.14.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

Cézanne's – bathers, still lifes, and portraits – and unexpectedly, a detail from Van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait."<sup>230</sup>

Bell herself stressed the importance of reproductions for her early artistic development as a student stating:

My chief source was Mauclair's tiny book about the impressionists. How one pored over those absurd little reproductions which gave one hardly any idea, yet which seemed to suggest that after all living painters might be as alive as the dead, that there was something besides the lovely quality of old paint to be aimed at, something fundamental and permanent and as discoverable now as in any other age.<sup>231</sup>

A later example of Bell's instructive use of photographic reproductions is evidenced in her notes for a lecture given to her son Quentin's class at Leighton Park School in 1925, where she noted possible slide illustrations to accompany her points, including works by Chardin, Cézanne and Rembrandt.<sup>232</sup> Duncan Grant gained his first understanding of French impressionism and other modern artists like Whistler while a student at Westminster School of Art between 1902 and 1905. As Frances Spalding notes Grant had at the time "seen very little work by either Degas or Whistler, but had surmised a great deal from reproductions and the occasional photograph."<sup>233</sup>

Bell and Grant's use of photographic reproductions of works by many of the artists mentioned above suggests this demonstrably "modern" aspect of their artistic process and this clearly situates them in the visual culture of modernism in a way that has not previously been identified.

As mentioned earlier, many photographic studios in the Victorian period were keen to align themselves with fine art declaring on the back of the carte de visite photographs and cabinet images they produced 'photographed by J Benson, artist' or listing their services as 'Photographers and Miniature Landscape Painters.' Many of the photographic reproductions in the Charleston Collection show that photographing the fine arts and providing reproductions had become a specialised area. The renowned firm

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p.283.

<sup>231</sup> V. Bell, 'Memories of Roger Fry', reproduced in Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, p.129.

<sup>232</sup> V. Bell, 'Lecture given at Leighton Park School' reproduced in Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, pp.200-201.

<sup>233</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.21.

*Fratelli Alinari, Editori Fotografichi* (established 1852) concentrated to a large degree on producing catalogues of images of buildings and works of art after 1861.<sup>234</sup> The Charleston Collection contains examples of images by the Alinari studios including a reproduction of Tintoretto's *Annunciation of the Virgin* dating between 1915 and 1920 (Figure 89).

Another example of studio produced fine art photography is an image produced by the famed Bisson Brothers of Paris (1841-64) (Figure 90). The firm, initially named 'Bisson Père et Fils', had begun producing daguerreotype portraiture but in the 1850s moved into the field of fine art photography, capturing architecture and paintings, in particular the works of Rembrandt and Durer. It is likely these photographs were marketed as a set rather than as individual images since the Charleston Collection contains a group of ten small scale photographic reproductions of engravings by Dürer from originals in the Bibliothèque National; each inscribed with '*Bisson freres, photographe. Edition Clement.*' This inscription refers to the fact that in 1858 the Bisson Brothers sold the rights to three publishing companies, Goupil, Colnaghi and Clement, to produce reproductions of the eighty four images in "twenty six instalments of four plates each."<sup>235</sup> Clement also produced a volume of one hundred and ten prints in 1861 under the title "OEUVRE D'ALBERT DÜRER. PHOTOGRAPHIÉ PAR MM. BISSON FRÈRES" which contained some prints at folio size (17 ½ x 12 ¾ inches).<sup>236</sup> The Charleston Dürer reproductions correspond very closely to this format measuring 17.7 x 12.4 inches so it is possible that later editions were based on the initial format set out in the 1861 publication.

Other reproductions by Bisson Brothers produced in the 1850s while they were situated at 3 R. des St Perles (as stamped on the back of the Charleston image under discussion) were also published under *E. Gambart & Co.*, 25 Berners St. Oxf. St. London, a firm that was often a joint publisher with Bisson Brothers. Following Gambart's retirement in 1870 the business passed to his nephew Leon Lefevre who ran the business and

<sup>234</sup> Sorensen, L. (ed.) 'Alinari, Leopoldo', in *Dictionary of Art Historians*, 3 February 2011, [www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org](http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org). [accessed 3 February 2011].

<sup>235</sup> P. Hertzmann, et al., *100 Books with Original Photographs* (San Francisco: Bacchus Press, 2003) <http://www.hertzmann.net/pages/catalogs/73.pdf> p. 12 [accessed 12 August 2011].

<sup>236</sup> Hertzmann, et al., *100 Books with Original Photographs*, p.12.

gallery space under the name Pilgeram & Lefèvre.<sup>237</sup> Bell and Grant later had close associations including individual and group exhibitions of their work, with a later incarnation, the Lefèvre Gallery. This gallery opened in 1926 by Alex Reid and Ernest-Albert Lefèvre and recognised for championing Impressionist and Modern Art.<sup>238</sup> The movement towards studio specialisation in fine art photography is often spelled out by the stamps on the back of many photographic reproductions. A stamp on the back of a reproduction of ‘Madonna and Child’ produced circa 1920 carries the following information:

*By Appointment*  
*William E Gray*  
*92, Queen’s Road Bayswater W*  
*Fine Art Photographer*  
*To HIS MAJESTY THE KING*

Within the Charleston Collection there are a number of large scale photographic reproductions from Lemercier (active 1850–1884) one of the largest publishing companies in France. These prints were produced by a process called *photogravure* which was the considered the best way to reproduce photographs of works of art in large quantities.<sup>239</sup> Vanessa Bell noted her experimentation with a similar process, lithography, and found that it produced good quality results as she explained in a letter written in 1945 to fellow artist Janey Bussy:

*I am very glad the Master [Matisse] continues to work, even in bed. There’s a very fine lithograph by him now being shown at Miller’s, a portrait of a woman, hard and uncompromising and hideous and drawn in the greatest detail. By the way, I hope you know that lithographs are sure to be demanded of you the moment you reach this country, so you’d better prepare your mind. All you need to do at present is drawings which you can use when you get here. There is a great demand for them and I’m sure lithos of Nice would sell like hot cakes. They can be either in one, two, three or even four colours. It’s the kind of thing one can do sometimes when one hasn’t time or materials for painting in oil*<sup>240</sup>

<sup>237</sup> P. Fletcher, ‘Creating the French Gallery: Ernest Gambart and the Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery in Mid-Victorian London’, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, Vol. 6, No.1, 2007.

<sup>238</sup> “Photographic Processes-Photogravure,” *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/p/photographic-processes/> [accessed 6 September 2012]

<sup>239</sup> G. Baldwin and M Jurgins, *Looking at Photographs: A Guide to Technical Terms* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), p.69.

<sup>240</sup> V. Bell to J. Bussy, 11 March 1945 in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.489.

The majority of the Lemer cier reproductions in the Charleston Collection are depictions of the goddess Venus in different guises, from *Venus Vulcan* by Tintoretto, *Sleeping Venus* by Giorgione, and *Venus Epithalamia* by Edward Burne-Jones. Given there are nineteen images of this kind by artists ranging from Jacopo Carucci, Francesco di Cristofano Bigi, Robert Le Tier re and Bellini, it is probable that Lemer cier produced a thematic folio of images for purchase (Figures 91-92).

Much as some photographic studios had found a market niche by specialising in fine art photography, museums and galleries began to encourage artists and students to buy reproductions from their collections. A survey of the Charleston Collection demonstrates that this was an international development with an institutional interest in documenting artworks, objects and architecture. National Collections are well represented in Bell and Grant's collection of fine art reference photography with reproductions of paintings and photographs of objects from institutions such as The National Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>241</sup>

International museums also made photographic reproductions available for purchase. Bell and Grant's archive includes a reproduction of *Statue of a Resting Satyr* completed by Praxiteles in 130 AD and now in the Museo Capitolino, in the Piazza Campidoglio, Rome. This information is clearly stamped on the bottom of the image (Figure 93). Prior to being acquired by the museum, the statue was situated at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, a grand garden and palace scheme begun by Cardinal Ippolito d' Este in 1550. Interestingly Vanessa Bell and her sibling visited the Villa d'Este in 1902, a visit which she documented with her camera.<sup>242</sup> The Villa was again a point of interest for tourists at this time following over a century of dereliction. It is unlikely that *Statue of a Resting Satyr* was there at the time of Bell's visit as much of the statuary had been dispersed in the prior years of decay in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> For example, CHA/PH/268, Unknown artist, Madonna and Child, photographic print by National Gallery, London 29 cm by 16 cm, Charleston Collection and CHA/PH/20, Unknown maker, 17<sup>th</sup> century carved wooden finial, date unknown, 25 cm x 32.5 cm Charleston Collection. Both of these photographs were too fragile to be scanned for inclusion here which suggests the possibility of heavy usage.

<sup>242</sup> Vanessa, Toby, Virginia and Adrian Stephen were accompanied on this trip by their step brother George Duckworth. See images of this trip in Chapter One (Figures 63 and 64)

<sup>243</sup> ' Villa d'Este- official site, n.d. <http://www.villadestetivoli.info/storiae.htm> [accessed 20th July 2011]

Another example of a museum produced photographic reproduction in the Charleston Collection is *Adoration of the Magi* by Veronese (1571) from the Dresden State Art Collections (Stattliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden) (Figure 94). The inscription of the bottom reads: *Paolo Veronese, Di Antbetung der Konige Kgl Germald. Gal. Dresden No. 225*). Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant had travelled around Germany, Austria and Prague in January 1929. It is possible this reproduction was either acquired at that time, or by Grant during a solo journey to Berlin in 1924 to complete a portrait commission for the Rothschild family. He certainly visited the Stattliche Kunstsammlungen on that trip. The further example is a reproduction of *Virgin Enthroned and Child with Musician Angels* by Cristoforo Caselli (c. 1507-1510) in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan (Figure 95). The inscription on the bottom indicates that the photograph was produced by the Alinari studio (inscribed *Ed. Alinari*).

A letter written by Vanessa Bell to her Slade classmate Margery Snowden indicates how integral trips to galleries and museums were to Bell, Grant and their circle and how exciting it was to view works previously only seen in the form of reproductions.

After a few days in Paris with Clive, Duncan and I came on to Spain, where Roger met us at Barcelona, a very dull place. We then went on to other places, some very lovely, on the way here, and now we've been here 3 days or so. I feel as if I ought to write to you about the Prado, I'm sure I must have inflicted all my feelings about Velasquez upon you years ago, and you can imagine how exciting it is now to see pictures one has known well from reproductions for so many years. Not that I can really give you any idea of the pictures here. They are simply overwhelming and unlike any collection of Old Masters I have seen. They are very well hung. The light is splendid. They have no glass to get in the way as in the Nat. Gallery, and they are almost as fresh apparently as when they were painted. In fact they're very like modern painting and often give one quite a new idea of some painter whose work one has only seen before through coats of brown varnish. Also it is the most extraordinarily good collection. Some of the best Titians are here as well as some of the finest Raphael's, Rubens and of course all the Spaniards, Velasquez, Goya, El Greco, Ribera etc. One could spend a good many weeks looking at them all. I expect we shall spend about one. As for Velasquez, I feel quite bewildered. I don't know what I think of him except one never seems to get tired of looking at him. His colour is most surprising, Instead of being all very subdued greys and blacks and browns, which was my general idea of it, some of the paintings here are almost dazzling, bright blues and all sorts of the gayest colours, almost like Renoir. One sees where Steer and the New Englishers got their ideas, but also where Whistler and Sargent got theirs too.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> V. Bell to M. Snowden, May 24 1923, Madrid, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 271.

The Charleston Collection contains nine images from the Dial Publishing Company. During its lifespan from 1920 to 1929 The *Dial* magazine provided a voice and platform for the avant-garde in America where it was published and across Europe.<sup>245</sup> The *Dial* promoted modernist aesthetic by reproducing works by post-impressionist painters including Grant and sculptors alongside articles, short stories and novel excerpts from key Bloomsbury figures like Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf and other modern writers. At its height the magazine had a circulation of just under 25, 000.<sup>246</sup> The *Dial* was certainly useful to Bell and Grant because it published high quality photographic images of the works of contemporary artists. These images were also ‘travel photographs’ for many of the magazine’s readers in North America who had never travelled to Europe and were now able to view works via the printed medium.<sup>247</sup> Among the images Bell and Grant collected were individual images pulled from regular editions of the *Dial* magazine. Examples include reproductions of works by Ernesto De Fiori, Aristide Maillol and Alfeo Faggi (Figures 96-98). The remaining *Dial* images kept by Bell and Grant formed part of a folio of photographic reproductions published in 1924 entitled ‘Living Art – Twenty Facsimile Reproductions After Paintings, Drawings, and Engravings, and Ten Photographs after Sculpture, by Contemporary Artists.’ The preface to the folio pointedly proclaimed its modernist aims stating:

The pictures presented in THE DIAL folio must be considered as a definitive repudiation of the cursed fetish of naturalism; in no instance do they aspire to the rendition of the accidents of texture, or the superficial display of the atmospheric elements of purely visual impressions which, because of some momentary appeal, are only isolated fragments done over again in the manner of the photograph. It is in relation to the inherent need for human values that we must look at these works, the need for a significance of motif over and beyond technical consequences – the demand of the intelligent mind for exciting emotional nourishment.<sup>248</sup>

Together the twenty reproductions were chosen by the editor of the *Dial* as “representative of the spirit of modernism,” the artists having “summed up the whole of

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<sup>245</sup> True, M. *Modernism, The Dial, and the Way They Were The Dial: Arts and Letters in the 1920s; An anthology of writings from The Dial magazine, 1920 – 29* (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1981), p.5. See also C. Walker and J. Butler. ‘The Dial,’ *Index of Modernist Magazines*, <http://sites.davidson.edu/littlemagazines/the-dial/> [accessed 6, September, 2012].

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>248</sup> T. Craven, “Living Art,” *Modernism, The Dial, and the Way They Were The Dial: Arts and Letters in the 1920s; An anthology of writings from The Dial magazine, 1920 – 29* (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1981) p. 75



[their] spiritual strength in the creation of art that [would] not be only a personalized reflection of modernity, but also a powerful factor in the progressive experience of the race.”<sup>249</sup> Other images in the Charleston Collection include *No. 8 - After Christopher Wren* by Charles Demuth (circa 1920), *No. 3 - The Hands of Moses*, by Boardman Robinson (circa 1918), *No. 5 - Marble*, a sculpture by Constantin Brancusi (circa 1920), and *No. 6 Female Figure* by Alexander Archipenko (circa 1921). The inclusion of the *Dial* reproductions in the Charleston Collection further demonstrates Bell and Grant’s identification with developments in modern art and literature at home and abroad and the way in which photographic reproductions in “little magazines” like the *Dial* contributed to the dissemination of modernist thought and artistic endeavours.<sup>250</sup>

### **Exchanging Images: Examining the Back of Reference Photographs to Identify How They Were Used**

In the studio at Charleston there is a pile of yellowed, torn reproductions which includes works by Degas, Renoir and Cézanne among others. Their tattered condition far from suggesting that they have been discarded and forgotten suggests extensive use and an essential role in the studio space (Figure 99). Unlike Vanessa Bell’s photograph albums which were neatly arranged in chronological order with clear captions, these photographic reproductions are workmanlike, showing wear and tear and offering none of the delicacy of considered placement (Figure 100).<sup>251</sup>

Indeed it is this element of functionality in the photographic reproductions that exemplifies what a valued part of Bell and Grant’s practice they were. In examining the reverse of the reproductions in detail what immediately becomes apparent is that they are travelled images having gone through numerous processes of exchange over an extended period of time. This section identifies ways in which these reproductions were continuous working documents, given, received, stored and consulted by Bell, Grant and other members of the Bloomsbury circle.

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<sup>249</sup> Craven, “Living Art” p. 75

<sup>250</sup> A comprehensive cataloguing of these ‘little magazines’ has been completed by the *Modernist Magazines Project* under the direction of Professor Peter Brooker and Professor Andrew Thacker

<http://www.modernistmagazines.com/index.php>

<sup>251</sup> Photograph included in Q. Bell, et al., *Charleston: A Bloomsbury House and Garden* (London: Frances Lincoln, 1997), p.71.

The reference photographs at Charleston served a number of purposes for Bell and Grant as well as for their extended group of family, friends and associates who lived, worked and visited Charleston at various times. A key element of travel photography of creating a visual substitute for the physical journey to a place or object is inherent in attitudes towards some reference images in the Charleston Collection.

The number of reproductions collected by Bell and Grant of both old master and contemporary works suggests that they frequently sought inspiration from artworks in Continental museum and gallery collections as well as in the studios of their artist contemporaries. In other cases, the artists did travel to see the original work. For example Duncan Grant painted a direct copy of Piero della Francesca's *Duke of Urbino* during his first visit to Florence and the Uffizi in 1904. In some cases copies were made to stand in the place of original works. Following the purchase in Paris of what would be the first work by Picasso in England *Pots et Citron* Bell had written breathlessly to her sister Virginia:

*As for us, we're in a huge state of excitement having just bought a Picasso for £4. It's "cubist" and very beautiful colour, a small still-life...Paris is pandemonium. All the streets are up, and the crowd is terrific, but I enjoy it. They all seem so irresponsible, and the clothes are amusing, and one gets a sense of holiday.*<sup>252</sup>

When the painting was sold in the 1960s, Quentin Bell's 1958 copy was hung in pride of place, the substitute image standing in tribute to the feelings of joy and freedom that had accompanied the trip to Paris and occasioned the purchase of such an important work.

Photography appears to have been accorded a similar status. In lieu of the original Poussin which had hung in the dining room at Charleston (later sold by Duncan Grant), a photographic substitute is propped up on the mantelpiece in Clive Bell's study; the inscription on the reverse reading: "Photo of the Poussin sold by DG to Anthony Blunt used to hang in the Dining room at Charleston"(Figures 101-102).<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 19 October 1911, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 109.

<sup>253</sup> This painting was acquired by Duncan Grant in 1921 in Paris and bought by Anthony Blunt in 1963 for £12, 000, after it was brought to his attention and identified by him. See Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p. 442.

## **A Wider Circulation: The Public Role of Photographic Reproductions in Manuscript Preparations and Exhibition Organisation**

Many of the photographic reproductions in the Charleston Collection appear to have been used for a purpose quite apart from their traditional role as reference material for making original artworks or copies of other paintings. They were used as a decorative substitute and as material on which Bell and Grant used to sketch personal messages or preparatory sketches. It is also possible to identify images as relating to books written by Clive Bell and exhibitions involving Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and other contemporary artists. The use of images in this way reveals two key developments. Firstly it shows how photography was a primary means of communicating the principles of modern art according to Bloomsbury's key art theorists Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Secondly, the extensive collection of photographic reproductions of the work of Bell, Grant and contemporaries they frequently exhibited with demonstrates that they were keenly aware of and interested in documenting the development of their fellow artists. Indeed, they often used photographs during the organisational process when mounting exhibitions. Together both types of images can be considered travel photography because they relate to the dissemination of ideas espoused and artworks created by the Bloomsbury Group and their associates to the general public. These processes of exchange were central to a wider critical appreciation of Bell, Grant and their contemporaries and the establishment of a healthy market for artists associated with the modern art movement in England and overseas.

A number of the photographic reproductions in the Charleston Collection have annotations on the reverse that offer great insight into how Clive Bell used them in the process of writing and preparing books and articles for publication.<sup>254</sup> Interestingly, his evident enthusiasm for providing the reader with numerous reproductions to illustrate his points can be seen to be at odds with his attitude regarding the relationship between photography and fine art. These conflicting ideas will be addressed in this section followed by a consideration of Clive Bell's use of photography as a visual device in two texts, *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting* and *An Account of French Painting*. His use

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<sup>254</sup> My indebtedness to Richard Shone who identified a number of these reproductions and their relation to Clive Bell's work in 2006.

of reproductions in the written argument further cements the photographic reproduction of artwork as a form of travel photography.

Bell's footnote annotations in *An Account of French Painting* and *Landmarks in 19th Century Painting* and his organisational annotations on the reverse of images to be included in the two texts, which are still retained in the Charleston Collection, suggest the centrality of photographic reproductions in his writing process and in disseminating his theories to the general public. Given this, it is perhaps surprising that Bell expressed such clear dissatisfaction with the suggestion of a relationship between fine art and the photographic medium.

The 'Prolegomena' of *Landmarks in 19th Century Painting* includes a lengthy section on the perils of photography for the true artist. For Clive Bell, photography is part of a 'machine' grasped eagerly by commercial artists in trade but having nothing to do with "the pure, self-conscious, self-critical artist...concerned solely with expressing himself through form."<sup>255</sup> Bell further implies that photography is "a trade in the craft of likeness-catching" while the artist is "concerned with something out of and above contemporary life or he is nothing."<sup>256</sup> This argument is grounded in Bell's discussion of his understanding of the effect of the photographic medium on Victorian painters who he believed aped the camera's capabilities but added emotion and sentiment, thereby convincing the public that they could "pay homage at once to Science and Sentiment."<sup>257</sup> Rather Bell suggests with conviction "...the camera was one of the causes of the Victorian debacle, destroying the men who would have been honest academic painters, or rather converting them into mere pictorial chatterboxes..."<sup>258</sup>

In contrast, in the forward written for Helmut Gernsheim's 1948 monograph *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work* Bell expresses a high regard for Cameron and emphasises her opposition to photographic and artistic conventions marks her out as a true artist stating: "She appreciated the difference between things and the labels on things. The latter are, of course, what the average man calls "reality" and are

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<sup>255</sup> Bell, *Landmarks in 19th Century Painting*, p.13.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

in fact no more than conventions useful for getting through life.”<sup>259</sup> Bell’s contribution to Gernsheim’s monograph underscores the idea of photographs, particularly in relation to their significance for and usage by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, as agents of appropriation or opposition to convention and avenues of exchange.<sup>260</sup> Recounting his beginnings as a collector of significant photographs Gernsheim recalled visiting a photography dealer in 1947/8 who, in response to his suggestion of lowering the price for a group of Cameron photographs, responded: “Well, perhaps. The ‘Mrs. Duckworth’—who ever heard of her— you can have her for three guineas.”<sup>261</sup> This suggests how unconventional Gernsheim’s interest in Cameron’s work was at the time. This encounter can be contrasted with Gernsheim’s experience of viewing original Cameron images for the first time at the invitation of Clive Bell:

He said, "Well then come with me. My wife has quite a collection of photographs which were given to her and her sister by Julia Margaret Cameron. These are very fine pictures, and you should come over one day and see them." I did. And later on I was able to buy my pick from this collection, which to my mind was the finest collection.<sup>262</sup>

As an art critic, Clive Bell trained himself not only to look critically at artworks, objects and architecture in the flesh and in the form of reproductions but also to analyse and explain their meaning and context. Following his arrival at Trinity College Cambridge in 1899 he was noted for his large photographic reproduction of a work by Edward Degas.<sup>263</sup> The variation in his annotations on the reverse of photographic reproductions offers insight into the way he organised his thoughts. A photograph of the statue of Marcus Aurelius in the Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome provides a typical example of his detailed annotations (Figure 103). The text on the reverse reads:

Bronze equestrian statue of “Marcus Aurelius” in the Piazza del Campidoglio on the summit of the Capitoline Hill (Rome). It first stood near the arch of Septimus Severus; it was then placed in front of the Lateran, was moved to its present position by Michael Angelo in 1338, who is said to have cried out to the horse “cammino” (go on) [sic]. It is so full of life. It is the only native [sic] statue in bronze which has

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<sup>259</sup> C. Bell, ‘Forward’, in H. Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*. (London: Gordon Fraser, 1948, rpt 1975), p. 5.

<sup>260</sup> Gernsheim later collaborated with his wife Alison and Bell’s son Quentin on *Those Impossible English*.

<sup>261</sup> H. Gernsheim, ‘Gernsheim on Gernsheim’ *Image*, Vol.27, No.4, 1984, p.3.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>263</sup> Caws and Bird Wright, *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends*, p.73.

been preserved for us [sic] as a specimen of ancient Art. Marcus Aurelius was buried in the Mausoleum of Hadrian now the Castle of St Angelo and his dates [sic] are read in the inscription on the pedestal.<sup>264</sup>

The narrative aspect of this description and those on some of the other photographic reproductions contrasts with the majority of annotations where Clive Bell simply noted the title, possible sizing and in some cases a dedicated plate number (Figure 104). Due to these variations in content and handwriting, the latter example being much freer in its script, it is possible that the photographs with detailed annotations represent Bell's early work as a student and art critic.

Another example of Clive Bell's organisational 'marking' can be seen on an image of Ingres' *Mademoiselle Riviere* (1805). Selected as the frontispiece for *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting*, the reverse of the image is marked with a number of co-ordinates, artist and title, measurements, stamped place of origin – *Les Archives Photographique D' Art et D'Histoire* – and finally its destination in the publication, "Cover Front" (Figure 105). That this was common practice for Bell is demonstrated by the fact that all of the Charleston images in his books share similar information. Another image included in *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting* is Delacroix's *Liberty Guiding the People 28 July 1830* (Figure 106).

The importance to Clive Bell of providing visual support for his assertions is made clear in a brief note in *An Account of French Painting*: "About illustrations: from thirty-two photographs, which is as many as I have room for, you will not expect a representation of French painting. I use them wholly to support the text."<sup>265</sup> The 'supportive' role that Bell ascribes to his photographic reproductions is apparent in both *An Account of French Painting* and *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Art*. Bell uses footnotes to alert the reader to his process of image selection and the provenance of particular images. This spelling out of process and place highlights Clive Bell's interest in selecting the best and most representative images and, the more general role of photographic reproductions in his work.

Examples of what might be termed locational footnotes relating to the reproductions in *An Account of French Painting* point to a variety of sources. A discussion of Poussin's

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<sup>264</sup> CHA/PH/70e, reverse inscription by Clive Bell.

<sup>265</sup> Bell, *An Account of French Painting*, p.21

*L'Inspiration du Poete* (1629-1630) is supplemented with the notation that: "A writer with a taste for singularity will not miss a chance of expressing gratitude to his publisher. Without the pertinacity and good humour of Mr. Brace, of Harcourt, Brace, Inc., I should never have come by this delightful photograph."<sup>266</sup>

Similarly, Bell's comments on the selection of the final image for his text speak tellingly of the difficulties of image selection (Figure 107). He remarks:

I had meant to reproduce another and more instructive picture also in Mr. Courtauld's collection--a superb example of Seurat at his most austere. The owner assured me that all the quality of this masterpiece would be lost in a photograph. I did not believe him, but experiment proved that he was perfectly right.<sup>267</sup>

*Landmark's in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting* also includes unique asides in the footnotes which draw the reader's attention to the source of the images and the reasons why Bell chose the ones he did. His commentary on *The Sabine Women* by David (1799) reiterates his assertion, established in *An Account of French Painting*, that photographs should support the text and that is it often the best known of an artist's works that accomplish this task (Figure 108). He wrote:

Instead, however, of reproducing a portrait, or the Marat, or the pretty Joseph Bara even, I have chosen *The Sabine Women*. This I have done because *The Sabine Women* illustrates my argument; and it is my plan, whenever the choice is forced on me, to choose always a picture which illustrates my text rather than one which does most credit to the master. In consequence, the reader, as he turns these pages, will meet a good many pictures with which he is familiar, and none perhaps which will take him quite by surprise. I beseech him to remember that they are here, not to give him a thrill but to bear out my words.<sup>268</sup>

A final example of Clive Bell's published footnote annotations is of particular interest because it underlines the potential difficulties of obtaining photographic reproductions of works of art. Commenting on his decision not to include a reproduction of *Les Grandes Baigneuses* in his discussion of Renoir, Bell stated that it was not his first choice but rather:

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p.72

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p.79

<sup>268</sup> Bell, *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting*, p. 24.

In the Petit Palais there is a *Baignade* by Courbet in which you will find, in a pose which Renoir has meditated to some purpose, that very red-haired, white-skinned woman which in the work of Renoir's middle period has become a signature almost, footnote – I would have been glad to reproduce this picture by Courbet; but an unlucky quarrel between the Ville de Paris and Courbet's heirs, now in litigation, puts a temporary stop to taking pictures.<sup>269</sup>

Copying for Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant was at the foundation of their training as artists. Some of that training was institutionally directed. Grant studied at the Westminster Art School and 'La Palette' in Paris under Jacques-Emile Blanche, and Bell at the Painting School of the Royal Academy and the Slade.<sup>270</sup> Roger Fry had his first extensive encounters with Italian paintings in the 1880s through the photographic collection of his professor at the Slade, J.H. Middleton.<sup>271</sup> It was a skill they drew upon frequently throughout their careers though it was not without its difficulties. Bell for example was told that making watercolour copies was not allowed after she spilt water in a gallery in Dresden in 1929.<sup>272</sup>

Photographic reproductions proved a useful substitute when it was not possible to travel to see the original work or painting materials were not available. Duncan Grant's first encounters with works by the Impressionists and Whistler were through reproductions and photographs.<sup>273</sup> Much later Roger Fry used photographic reproductions of works by Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh from Parisian photographer Druet in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition as visual reminders of the early Post-Impressionists.<sup>274</sup> It has been noted that one of the primary reasons for staging the exhibition was to demonstrate the cultural and artistic exchanges between English artists and their continental contemporaries.<sup>275</sup>

It could be said that, conceptually, Roger Fry's 1917 exhibition entitled *An Exhibition of Omega Copies and Translations* reinforced the idea that the works of the Old Masters

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p.189. This image, annotated by Clive Bell is CHA/PH/398 in the Charleston Collection.

<sup>270</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.46, Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p.32.

<sup>271</sup> Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, p.25.

<sup>272</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p.228.

<sup>273</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.21.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>275</sup> Caws and Bird Wright, *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends*, p.155.



and contemporary artists exist in a continual dialogue of re-evaluation and re-appreciation.<sup>276</sup> Fry's belief that it was a healthy endeavour to re-make the great works of the past is a constant theme in his writings. In his 1905 article for *The Athenaeum* on Wedgewood China he traced the "return to classical models" in the development of ceramics through the following centuries: "Forms were borrowed, the content was entirely new and changed and modified the forms, till they also became in effect an entirely original art."<sup>277</sup> The *Copies and Translations* exhibition included copies by Grant of Pollaiuolo and Piero della Francesca and by Bell of Bronzino and Giotto.<sup>278</sup>

Roger Fry underscored the usefulness of photographic reproductions in his letter to Vanessa Bell dated the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 1917:

*...I've been looking at lots of my photos of the Old Masters with new interest and find Cimabue more wonderful than ever. I'm copying a S. Francis out of his big fresco at Assisi. I had never really studied that before, at least not with enlightened eyes, and find what I thought before were weaknesses of early incapacity are really the results of a sensitivity one had never understood. The whole composition is marvellous...Well, but what's so wonderful – when one begins to study the forms in detail one gets just the kind of purposeful distortion and pulling of planes that one gets in Greco and Cézanne and the same kind of sequence in contours.*<sup>279</sup>

An August 1916 letter from Bell to Fry similarly identifies the inspirational nature of copying. She writes: "I enjoy doing it so much. For some reason I feel nearly free as if I were painting on my own account. I have quite changed the colour scheme."<sup>280</sup> In another letter from May 1917 Fry told his sister Margery that he has "...done from a photo a figure out of a Cimabue fresco – which has led me to make the discovery that Cimabue is the same thing practically as the El Greco and Cézanne"<sup>281</sup> Fry had been sending reproductions from his own collection to Bell and Grant at Wissett Lodge and it is very possible that some of the reproductions in the Charleston Collection today were

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<sup>276</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*.

<sup>277</sup> R. Fry, 'Wedgewood China' in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed by C. Reed, originally published in *The Athenaeum*, 15 July 1905, pp.88-89 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.192.

<sup>278</sup> Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.20.

<sup>279</sup> R. Fry to V. Bell, 6 April 1917, reproduced in D. Sutton (ed.) *Letters of Roger Fry Volume Two* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), p.408.

<sup>280</sup> V. Bell to R. Fry, August 1916, Tate Gallery Archives, reproduced in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.178.

<sup>281</sup> R. Fry to M. Fry, dated May 2 or 3, Sutton (ed.) *Letters of Roger Fry Volume Two*, p.410.

acquired from him.<sup>282</sup> Fry's reference in the *Copies and Translations* catalogue to the art of copying as a method which could "reveal certain qualities more clearly than the original"<sup>283</sup> is certainly interesting and finds parallels in Walter Benjamin's much later assertion about photography being "... able to bring out aspects of the original that can be accessed only by the lens"<sup>284</sup>

For Bell and Grant the task of painting in the style of artists who inspired them was not without its difficulties. Bell, writing to Fry a month prior to the exhibition opening, expressed her frustrations: "Mine is still getting more and more horrible and as smooth as a billiard ball. The colour is too awful. Is yours finished and have you begun the Raphael?"<sup>285</sup> Bell submitted five works, two copies of Giotto, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian miniature, a Bronzino and a Sassoferrato Madonna from the National Gallery that was also copied by Roger Fry.<sup>286</sup> Grant's contributions to *Copies and Translations* included early copies from 1905-06 of a detail of Mary and Joseph in Piero della Francesca's *Nativity* at the National Gallery, later bought by Maynard Keynes and now in the collection at King's College, Cambridge and a portrait of *Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino* (Charleston).<sup>287</sup> Grant's other copies were completed nearer the time of the exhibition and most likely included Sassetta's *The Mystic Marriage of St Francis* (King's College, Cambridge) and Pollaiuolo's *Apollo and Daphne* from the National Gallery.<sup>288</sup>

Two copies in the Charleston Collection suggest the importance of national art galleries at home and abroad in providing fertile ground for works to copy and secondly that Bell and Grant continued to make copies throughout their careers. Grant's copy of Piero

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<sup>282</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.179.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., p.180.

<sup>284</sup> Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, p.6.

<sup>285</sup> V. Bell to R. Fry, 16 April 1917, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.205.

<sup>286</sup> Sutton (ed.) *Letters of Roger Fry*, pp.402,407,410, Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p.163, Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.293.

Fry also made a copy of 'The Healing of the wounded man of Lerida' by Master of the St Cecilia altarpiece (twenty-sixth scene in the cycle of frescos, Upper Church, St Francesco, Assisi); the original was attributed to Buffalmacco at the time this copy was made to be shown in an exhibition of copies at the Omega Workshops, 1917 (cat. No. 1913). [This description is taken from Bell, et al., 'Duncan Grant's Room' in *Charleston: Past and Present*, p.56].

<sup>287</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.293.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

della Francesca's portrait of *Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino* dates from his first visit to Florence in 1904 in the company of his mother when he visited the Uffizi and viewed the masters of the Italian Renaissance both in the gallery and beyond (Figure 109). He found the Brancacci Chapel particularly inspiring.<sup>289</sup> Though there are no images in the Charleston Collection of Piero della Francesca's portrait or the Brancacci Chapel, the number of photographs and details of architectural and artistic landmarks and monuments, from the interior of St Marks Basilica to the decorations of Church of Santo Spirito and the murals in the crypt at St Savin, suggests that architectural images were a constant source of inspiration for Bell and Grant. Bell's 1934 copy of a painting attributed to Willem Drost 'Young Woman with her Hands Folded on a Book' (1653-55) at the National Gallery, London, suggests that she and Grant were also inspired by the works of more obscure artists as well as those better known (Figure 110).

Copying from life and from reproductions remained an important part of Bell and Grant's artistic process throughout their working lives. The significance of photography in the development of *Copies and Translations* exhibition of 1917 has not been previously highlighted in accounts of the exhibition but it is clear from contemporary correspondence that photographic reproductions played a vital role. For Bell, Grant, Fry and their contemporaries reproductions acted as a visual aid bridging the physical distance between themselves and the original works exactly as the copies in *Copies and Translations* were intended to do for the viewer.

In his chapter entitled "Looking at Photographs" John Tagg wrote in 1982:

A fact of primary social importance is that the photograph is a place of work, a structured and structuring space within which the reader deploys and is deployed by, what codes he or she is familiar with in order to make sense.<sup>290</sup>

Conceiving photographs as a 'place' for working out situates them within a flexible definition of travel photography. By reproducing works of art or focusing on details within a work of art, photographs can act as markers, both visible and psychological, of the journey of artistic creation. By examining specific projects by Vanessa Bell and

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<sup>289</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.33.

<sup>290</sup> J. Tagg, 'Looking at Photographs', in *Thinking Photography*, ed by V. Burgin (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 1982), p.147.

Duncan Grant that involved photography a greater understanding of the role of photography in their work can be reached.

Bell and Grant were intimately involved in the organisation of exhibitions and the hanging of their own work and that of their contemporaries through their involvement in a variety of artist led groups like the London Artists Association (established 1925). By collecting photographic reproductions of works by contemporary artists, Bell, Grant, Clive Bell and Roger Fry were able to follow their artistic development and potentially organise exhibitions including their work. This is borne out by their efforts to promote the work of English artists like C.R.W. Nevinson, Paul Nash, and William Roberts who are now considered central to the development of the modern art movement in England.

The contemporary artist most frequently encountered in the Charleston Collection is Victor Pasmore (1908-1998), an artist who co-exhibited with Bell and Grant (Figure 111). This selection of images can with certainty be traced to Clive Bell since all of them were chosen by him to appear in a publication on Pasmore for the *Penguin Modern Painters* series to which Bell also contributed an introductory essay.<sup>291</sup> These cheaply printed booklets played a central role in disseminating information about new and established English modern artists<sup>292</sup> Unlike the sometimes heavily annotated photographic reproductions marked for inclusion in *An Account of French Painting* and *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Art* the Penguin reproductions are either left blank or simply jotted with title and date.

The *Penguin Modern Painters* series (1944-59) was the brainchild of the founder of Penguin Books, Allen Lane, and largely edited by Kenneth Clark, then director of the National Gallery. The series was intended to produce affordable and accessible monographs on modern artists from Britain and beyond for the general public, a notion that was revolutionary at the time.<sup>293</sup> It appears that, as much as possible, the works by

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<sup>291</sup>V. Pasmore, *The Penguin Modern Painters: Victor Pasmore*, intro by C. Bell (London: Penguin Books, 1945).

<sup>292</sup> The nineteen artists featured in the series were Edward Bawden, Georges Braque, Edward Burra, Duncan Grant, Ivon Hitchens, Frances Hodgkins, Edward Hopper, David Jones, Paul Klee, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, William Nicholson, Victor Pasmore, John Piper, Ben Shahn, Matthew Smith, Stanley Spencer, and Graham Sutherland [124 pages with twelve colour plates] C. Peaker, *The Penguin Modern Painters: A History* (London: Penguin Books, 2001).

<sup>293</sup> Peaker, *The Penguin Modern Painters: A History*, p.9.

artists chosen to be profiled in each volume were photographed especially for the series. In fact, it was included in the contract that each artist must provide a painting free of charge for this purpose.<sup>294</sup> The paintings for each volume were either chosen by the author of each volume in collaboration with the artist or by Clark himself.<sup>295</sup> Kenneth Clark's decisions to commission Clive Bell to write the introduction to the volume on Victor Pasmore and to include Duncan Grant among the artists profiled in the first four volumes was indicative of his friendship with and patronage of Bell, Grant and their circle by placing their work in the public eye textually and photographically through the *Penguin Modern Painters* series.<sup>296</sup>

A number of images in the Charleston Collection are stamped or labelled Leicester Galleries, including works by Walter Sickert, Frank Dobson and Mark Gertler. A reproduction of Sickert's 1922-24 portrait *Monsieur Victor Lecourt* is of particular interest because it is so heavily annotated by more than one hand in both French and English (Figure 112). It is likely the Leicester Gallery notation on the reverse of works by contemporaries of Bell and Grant are in some way related to The London Artists' Association (active 1925-1934) to support member artists through providing regular income funded in part by mounting exhibitions to sell members' work.<sup>297</sup> Founding members of the Association included Bell, Grant, Roger Fry, Keith Baynes, Frank Dobson and Frederick Porter. The Association's first exhibition was held at the Leicester Galleries in June 1926. It is plausible that reproductions of these artists' works in the Charleston Collection were used to help organise this exhibition (Figures 113-116).<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., p.42.

<sup>296</sup> Carol Peaker, author of *The Penguin Modern Painters: A History*, notes that due to war time conditions earlier volumes of the series were subject to publication delays. The volume on Victor Pasmore for example was published two years after Bell had written the introductory text, during which time Pasmore's style began changing dramatically from the figurative to abstraction. Peaker suggests that this volume and Bell's introduction with added postscript provides "a nice point of closure to the first half of his career." p.58.

<sup>297</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.268.

<sup>298</sup> London Artists Association, *Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by Bernard Adeney, Keith Baynes, Vanessa Bell, Frank Dobson, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant and F. J. Porter (Leicester Galleries), 1926*, Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011 [http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/event.php?id=msib2\\_1207854685](http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/event.php?id=msib2_1207854685) [accessed 20 March 2011] and

Later members of the London Artists' Association included William Roberts, Paul Nash, Walter Sickert and Mark Gertler all of whom are represented in the Charleston Collection. These images may also have been used to organise exhibitions of their work. The reproduction of *An American* by William Roberts in the Charleston Collection was probably used in organising and/or hanging the 1929 exhibition of his work that was sponsored by the London Artists' Association (Figure 117). In addition to assisting in the organisation of shows for this association Bell and Grant were actively involved in organising of solo and joint exhibitions of contemporary artists like the Contemporary British Artists show which opened in June 1937 at Agnew's gallery, London.<sup>299</sup> This exhibition included works by Walter Sickert, Mark Gertler, Frank Dobson among others.

The use of photographic reproductions to organise exhibitions was certainly not uncommon at this time. As detailed earlier, Bell, Grant and Fry used them to prepare works for the 1917 exhibition *An Exhibition of Omega Copies and Translations*, Fry also hung images of works by Impressionist artists like Cezanne and Monet to provide the public contextual background for the work presented in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Post Impressionist Exhibition in 1912-13. All of these images can be placed under the umbrella of travel photography because they helped with the organisation of exhibitions that would be attended by members of the public. They also contributed to Bell and Grant's efforts to create coherent themes and narratives in the exhibitions they were involved with. Exhibitions can be seen as agents of exchange because attendees either appropriate the artworks by liking them or oppose them by regarding them in a negative light. Similarly, images in the exhibition setting involve cultural and sometimes financial exchanges between artists and exhibition viewers.

### **Bell and Grant's Private Responses to Press Coverage of Bloomsbury**

Publicity images also belong to the moment in the sense that they must be continually renewed and made up to date. Yet they never speak of the present. Often they refer to the past and always they speak of the future.<sup>300</sup>

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Courtauld Institute, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by Bernard Adeney, Keith Baynes, Vanessa Bell, Frank Dobson, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant and F.J.Porter*, London: Ernest, Brown and Phillips, 1926).

<sup>299</sup> Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 437.

<sup>300</sup> J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London: Penguin, 1972) p.130.

...one has the impression that publicity images are continually passing us, like express trains on their way to some distant terminus.<sup>301</sup>

The above quotations by John Berger reference two elements of press related photography that connect them to a reworked definition of travel photography and aspects of public identity. First, they are always on the move and “of the moment” as invoked by Berger’s train analogy. Second, the idea that publicity images refer to the past evokes a journey in time and an individual appropriation of images from the past or opposition to them in order to affirm or affect a reworking of the public personae.

Vanessa Bell’s attitude towards publicity and press interest in the Bloomsbury circle can also be viewed in terms of appropriation and opposition. The household at Charleston embraced all matter of literature, newspapers and magazines both high and low brow. In a letter to Janie Bussey, Bell remarked on the changing tastes of Charleston residents:

*...As for papers, of course I’ll send some. I thought I had better find out from Pippa whether and what she had sent, but as soon as I hear from her you shall have a selection, I daresay a very lowbrow one. This household has given up the Parish Mag. in disgust (though Q. Still hankers after it) and goes in mostly for such rags as Picture Post and the Listener, which rouse Clive’s scorn every time he sees them. But I shall treat you as though you shared our low tastes.*<sup>302</sup>

Conversely, in 1951 in a private Memoir Club presentation to her friends and family Bell’s characterisation of ‘Bloomsbury’ as it was often perceived in public terms is referred to with an air of resignation:

It is lucky perhaps that Bloomsbury has a pleasant reverberating sound, suggesting old-fashioned gardens and out-of-the-way walks and squares; otherwise how could one bear it? If every review, every talk on the radio, every biography, every memoir of the last 50 years, were to talk incessantly of Hoxton or Brixton, surely our nerves would be unbearably frayed. Perhaps they are even as it is, yet here I am proposing to add to the chaos.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p.120.

<sup>302</sup> V. Bell to J. Bussey, 10 April 1945, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 493. According to Marler The ‘Parish Mag’ refers to the *New Statesmen & Nation* or similar minded publication

<sup>303</sup> V, Bell, ‘Notes on Bloomsbury,’ reproduced in Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, p.95. The Memoir Club was formed in 1920 and centred around the reading of autobiographical papers to assembled members. Members included Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry J.M. Keynes, Lydia Keynes, Desmond MacCarthy, Molly MacCarthy, Quentin Bell and E.M Forster. The history of the Memoir Club has recently been explored in S.P. Rosenbaum, *The Bloomsbury Group Memoir Club* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

Bell's comments regarding media coverage of Bloomsbury seems indicative of her general discomfort with aspects of being an artist in the public eye. Having to deal with potential clients was something she particularly disliked. For example, though *Vogue* was a periodical that featured Bloomsbury artists and writers with great regularity, Bell recounted to Grant in February 1930: "...Some female, I don't know her name, editor of *Vogue*, rang up and wants to see me about our latest decorations. I suppose I must see her, but what a bore."<sup>304</sup> Beside the tiresome nature of such encounters Bell's greatest distaste was reserved for critics who either misrepresented or misunderstood what they were writing about. An excerpt from a letter to Roger Fry dating from September 1927 shows this clearly:

...There was an extraordinary notice in the Westminster Gazette the other day headed "Bloomsbury in Sussex" saying how the Woolves had their house and we and Keynes were near, how Duncan has a house in Gordon Sq. In which every inch was of interest and had just taken on his villa at Cassis for 5 years, Mrs. Bell had 3 children all gifted and good looking, gardens which she painted etc. etc. and a great deal about Tommy and the Davidsons. No one knows who wrote it...<sup>305</sup>

Bell frequently referred to imbecile articles in her letters, particularly in *The Times*. She noted in a letter to Clive Bell in 1931 that one particular article by 'Marriott' was "all sniping at Bloomsbury" and she related with frustration:

I really think it is time someone pointed out that Bloomsbury was killed by the War. His remarks might have made some sense if made about Roger and the Omega 15 or 16 years ago, but people might be allowed to be individuals by now I should have thought. Not that it matters much, only one wonders what the cause is".<sup>306</sup>

Interestingly Bell had no reservations about sharing information and stories about past generations of her family both inside and outside her circle of family and friends whether the request came from biographers or school students.<sup>307</sup> She remarked in a letter to Leonard Woolf "... It seems to me that if Bloomsbury is to be written about it must be by its own members (most of whom have done so). One can't tell the truth about living people and the world must wait till we're all dead...I don't mind telling

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<sup>304</sup> V. Bell to D. Grant, 5 February 1930, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.350.

<sup>305</sup> V. Bell to R. Fry, 4 September 1927, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.22.

<sup>306</sup> V. Bell to C. Bell, 14 June 1931, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 363. Marriot refers to Charles Marriot (1869-1957), art critic at *The Times*.

<sup>307</sup> Vanessa Bell gave a lecture to her son Quentin's class in 1925.



what I can about the past generation, but not about my own – except to my own family and friends.”<sup>308</sup>

Yet Bell also acknowledged the positive effects of media exposure, suggesting to Duncan Grant in February 1930 that the sale of twelve pictures during her one woman show at the Cooling Galleries was likely to have been “largely because of the Times article today”<sup>309</sup> Ironically this article was written by the same Charles Marriott who would so raise her ire the following year.

### **Critical Responses to Bloomsbury Personalities and Designs in Public Spaces**

In 1912 murals designed by Duncan Grant and Frederick Etchells for The Borough Polytechnic were unveiled and were among the first large scale Bloomsbury interior design projects to elicit press attention. Photography was a key element in both positive and negative critical responses. Bloomsbury associate Desmond MacCarthy referenced photography in a review of the murals entitled “Post Impressionist Frescos” and suggested they excited “indignation, natural in some cultured student who had recently acquired, say, a photograph of Watts’ *Love and Life*.”<sup>309</sup> This comment suggests Bloomsbury’s opposition to what they perceived as the outdated perceptions of the public who still clung on to artistic conventions of the past. Roger Fry disseminated the Borough Polytechnic murals by sending photographs of the work to an exhibition of school murals. The photographs were credited as “lent by Roger Fry for the workers,” a label suggesting the sense of modern progressiveness the murals were meant to express.<sup>310</sup>

A review of the murals by weekly British periodical *The Sketch* in March 1912 tells a great deal about press attitudes towards Bloomsbury and how newspapers and magazines of the period used photographic images in their reviews of exhibited works and decorative schemes (Figure 118). The title under the image was “The Simple Art, Would You Care to be a Disciple? – London Life As Set Upon Walls.” The review

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<sup>308</sup> V. Bell to L. Woolf, 20 July 1950, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 527.

<sup>309</sup> D. MacCarthy, ‘The Post Impressionist Frescos’, *The Eye Witness*, Vol.1, No.9, 1911, pp.661-662.

<sup>310</sup> C. Wilesdon, *Mural painting in Britain 1840-1940: Image and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.287.

stated that though the murals had caused much controversy they had been given approval by a number of “eminent men of science and letters.” The attribution of the photographs to “Messrs Hanfstaengel of 164 Pall Mall East” suggests that it was common practice for magazines and newspaper to commission photographic images from studio photographers. A later edition of *The Sketch* from the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1936 bears this out, making reference to various photographic resources including individual photographers, studios and photographic companies.<sup>311</sup>

Another review of Bloomsbury design using photographic images for dramatic effect was a feature on the Omega Workshops published in the *Daily Mirror* on 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1913 (Figure 119). Under the headline “A Post-Impressionist Flat-What Would Your Landlord Think?” the captions were unreservedly negative. One described an interior as “the kind of room in which you would live if your nerves could stand it” while a photograph of Roger Fry claimed that he is “thinking out some new futurist nightmare.”<sup>312</sup> The photographs for this feature are credited to *Daily Mirror* Photographs.

Daily and weekly newspapers and magazines from *The Illustrated London News* to the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* made full use of the camera’s ability to capture in fine detail what many reviewers considered The Omega Workshops’ strange designs. An article in the *Illustrated London Herald* employed a similarly condescending tone pointing out not only the outlandishness of the designs but also suggesting the eccentricity of a business that employs women to “take [the] place of men artists killed in the war.”<sup>313</sup>

Some reviewers made positive references to the Bloomsbury artists’ work but acknowledged the positive and negative effects of photographic reproductions. A

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<sup>311</sup> For example this edition of ‘The Sketch,’ featured ‘The Sketch Diary of Fashion’ with photographs by noted photographer John Everard, ‘The Sketch,’ 5<sup>th</sup> February 1936, p. 190-191, as well as by Finlay Colour, a photographic company at the forefront of the development of colour photography processes, ‘The Sketch,’ 5<sup>th</sup> February 1936, p. 282- 2-83, and a ‘Camera Portrait’ of Edward VIII by Hugh Cecil, ‘The Sketch,’ 5<sup>th</sup> February 1936, p. 279

<sup>312</sup> Anonymous, ‘A Post-Impressionist Flat- What Would Your Landlord Think’, *Daily Mirror*, 8<sup>th</sup> November 1913, ukpressonline, <http://www.ukpressonline.co.uk/ukpressonline/open/index.jsp> [accessed 16 March 2011].

<sup>313</sup> A. Gerstein (ed.), *Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913-1919* (London: Fontanka, 1999), p.78.

review in *The Spectator* of Roger Fry's 1924 monograph on Duncan Grant for the Hogarth Press's planned (but not continued) *Living Painters* series bears this out:

The exquisite, nicely balanced harmony of colour, which is so distinctive a mark of Mr. Grant's work, is, of course, lost in the half-tone reproductions, but something of the formal patterns and the quality of his paint remains: enough to convince anybody unfamiliar with his work that it commands attention. This, after all, and to act as reminders, is the most that reproductions can ever do. But it is a very great deal.<sup>314</sup>

### **Insider Promotion of Bloomsbury Design**

The public identity of Bloomsbury was most often positively presented by critics who made up Bell and Grant's wide circle of friends and associates. A notable example is *The New Interior Decoration: An Introduction to its Principles, and International Survey of its Methods* by Dorothy Todd and Raymond Mortimer published in 1929. In *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity* Chris Reed points to the difference presented in the text between Todd's discussion of widely understood conventions of modernist design while Mortimer suggests, with his promotion of interiors and objects by Bell and Grant, the connection between their work and the conventions of 'the new interior' while at the same time demonstrating their opposition to it.<sup>315</sup> The importance of photographic illustrations in describing this opposition cannot be underestimated.

The preface to *The New Interior Decoration* is emphatic in its linking of modernity to speed and movement:

...Experiments are being made in every continent, and while the investigator travelled from Tokyo to Madrid, the information he gathered in New York would already be out of date. Only when a movement is ended can its history be written; and the authors believe that the decorative style of the twentieth century is full of vigour and promise.<sup>316</sup>

Yet in his analysis of English decoration and the work of Bell, Grant and their wider professional circle, Raymond Mortimer suggests a different kind of movement/modernity is at work:

<sup>314</sup> Anonymous, 'The Art of Duncan Grant', *The Spectator*, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1924, <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/15th-march-1924/24/the-art-of-duncan-grant>.

<sup>315</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.2.

<sup>316</sup> R. Mortimer and D. Todd, *The New Interior Decoration: An Introduction to its Principles, and International Survey of its Methods* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), p. V.

The mechanical forms, the absence of all caprice, it may be said, will possibly suit the civilization of the future. They seem intended for Robots, rather than for human beings. As life grows more uniform and is increasingly dominated by machines, we may wish in our homes to escape from this impersonality. We need fantasy, imagination, with in our homes.<sup>317</sup>

For Raymond Mortimer the modern sense of movement in Bloomsbury decoration is characterised as a flight of fancy, very much in opposition to “The Corbusier style of decoration as formal as the old French salon.”<sup>318</sup> Many of the photographs chosen to accompany the text reflect the sense of advancing whimsy. In particular the two photographs of the hall in Ethel Sand’s home decorated in 1929 suggest this, from Lytton Strachey peering out of an open window, the spouting fountains, and the figure of the woman who has just climbed the stairs (Figure 120). All these decorative elements suggest movement with humour rather than force.

Raymond Mortimer and Dorothy Todd frequently used photographs of Bell and Grant’s work in their publications. Mortimer reproductions of Grant’s paintings in his 1944 monograph on him completed for the *Penguin Modern Painters* series. Possibly, Mortimer used Bell and Grant’s own photographic archive of their work and that of their contemporaries since many of the images in Mortimer’s publication are also in the Charleston Collection. Interior designs by Bell, Grant and Roger Fry were documented by *Vogue* from 1917 onwards and particularly when the magazine was under Dorothy Todd’s editorial control from 1923 to 1926.

Many aspects of *Vogue*’s use of photographs of Bell and Grant’s interiors lend themselves to a discussion of photography as an aid to placing one’s professional identity in the public domain. Much like a camera reflects a mirror image of a person or location so too did *Vogue* act as “both a text and a mirror providing an image of a woman that the reader might choose to assume as an identity.”<sup>319</sup> Similar to photography’s duality of amateur versus professional status, the success and appeal of Bloomsbury’s personalities, designs and writings to the readers of *Vogue* can in some part be attributed to the magazine’s “blurring of the boundary between high and low,” while simultaneously marketing to a selective and discerning audience, which was

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> A. Mahood, ‘Fashioning Readers: The Avant Garde and British Vogue, 1920-9’, *Women: A Cultural Review*, Vol.13, No.1, 2002, pp.37-47.

central to the magazine's ethos in the 1920s.<sup>320</sup> While dealing with Bloomsbury's public identity, *Vogue* also delved into the Group's private lives publishing features on their homes and offering the reader a voyeuristic journey into their private spaces.<sup>321</sup>

*Vogue* at this time also devoted a great deal of attention to the experience of travelling, focusing on differences between the culture of the traveller and those of the locations visited as well as the possibility of finding "Englishness" anywhere on the globe.<sup>322</sup> In many ways these descriptions bear a striking resemblance to the information provided for travellers in the guidebooks of the preceding generation.

### **The Omega Workshops Catalogue**

Bell and Grant's use of photography for publicity was at its height during the period they were involved with the Omega Workshops (1913-1919). The Omega Workshops used photography in a variety of ways to move the company into the public eye, from including photographs on advertising cards to producing publicity photographs of services offered, including dress-making, textiles, interior design and household accessories (Figures 121-123).<sup>323</sup> However, the earliest public reference to photography that Bell and Grant are connected with was an advertisement in the Second Post Impressionist Exhibition catalogue of 1912 for "Hanfstaengl – The Fine Art Reproducer purveyors of Old Masters facsimiles and 'photographs of Modern French Art.'" <sup>324</sup> This advertisement is interesting for a number of reasons. It shows how popular Hanfstaengl was as supplier of fine art images, as with those used in the feature on Grant and Etchells Borough Polytechnic murals by *The Sketch*. It also mentions that photographic reproductions of Old Masters and Modern French Art by Druet are "On View InThe Photographic Salon of This Exhibition" indicating that photography was considered an important visual component of the exhibition.

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<sup>320</sup> J. Garrity, 'Selling Culture to the "Civilised": Bloomsbury, British Vogue, and the Marketing of National Identity', *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol.6, No.2, 1999, pp.29-58.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Figure 132 reproduced in Shone, *Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Their Circle*, p.115, Figure 133 reproduced in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.119, Figure 134 reproduced in Spalding Roger Fry: *Art and Life*, p.178 and J. Collins, *The Omega Workshops* (London: Secker and Warburg), p.55.

<sup>324</sup> Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition: British, French and Russian Artists 1912, facsimile, London: Grafton Galleries, p.14, Charleston Collection.

In 1914 Omega produced the *Omega Workshops Descriptive Catalogue* using photography to emphasise the diversity of services and products available. As an example, the photograph of an antechamber includes Omega ceramics, sculpture, fire screen, carpet, and chairs. Photographs of complete decorative schemes work hand in hand with line drawings of individual objects to demonstrate how individual items fit into a larger room (Figures 124-125). The preface to the catalogue extends the concept of exchange between artist and object and object to interior to the exchange between the artist and consumer: “The artist is the man who creates not only for need but for joy and in the long run mankind will not be content without sharing that joy through the possession of real works of art.”<sup>325</sup>

This exchange between artist and consumer was at the same time an exchange between consumer and interior. Chris Reed has suggested that “Visitors to the Omega showrooms found themselves invited not so much to view as to inhabit an environment at once modern and Edenic.”<sup>326</sup> In many of their interior designs, Bell, Grant and the Omega Workshops communicated publically their private pleasure in the act of travelling to exotic places, of being away from the ordinary and routine. Garden, jungle and mountainscape murals all combined to take consumers on a journey. Along with Omega’s own creations, customers could buy contemporary and reproduction folk art, textiles, ceramics and mosaics from Asia, Italy and other lands, all adding to the sense of being able to buy things that were unique and exotic, almost as if one was on holiday.<sup>327</sup> Reporting journalists seemed similarly affected. A photograph from *The Daily News and Leader* from the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1912 shows the Omega Workshops in such a way that the viewer’s eye travels incrementally deeper into the image (Figure 126).<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> R. Fry, *Omega Workshops Descriptive Catalogue* (1914) p. 3, Figure 135. *Omega Workshops Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 6, reproduced on the website: C. Mullen, ‘The Visual Telling of Stories’ – A Catalogue of Object for Sale – The Omega Workshops, <http://www.fulltable.com/vts/o/om/o.htm> [accessed 11 March 2011].

<sup>326</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.133.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>328</sup> Figure 135. Photograph reproduced on the Tate Gallery Archive website, ‘Archive Journeys: Bloomsbury’ <http://www3.tate.org.uk/research/researchservices/archive/showcase/item.jsp?view=detail&item=1062>.

### **Bloomsbury Designs for Private Spaces and Responses Incorporating Travel**

Bell, Grant and other Bloomsbury artists often made references to travel both implicitly and explicitly in their work and often in humorous terms (Figure 127). A work by Roger Fry entitled *Essay in Abstract Design* (1915) includes collaged bus tickets. It is, on one hand, a study in abstraction but on the other it might have been something of an inside joke because the tickets covered the journey to the pottery where Omega artists produced ceramics for the Workshop.<sup>329</sup> Within the context of this thesis, the tickets also present a ‘snapshot’ of private journeys undertaken now rendered in a public form, a subject of exchange from artist to object to viewer.

Humour is also to be found in Roger Fry and Dolores Courtney’s mural commission for Arthur Rock’s home at 4 Berkeley Square, London. Depicting urban scenes of busy city pavements and an entrance to the Underground, a board at the front of a newspaper seller’s stall reads “this room is decorated by the Omega Workshops.” The striking nature of the murals also caught the eye of the contemporary media, and was profiled in *Colour* magazine in June 1916 (Figure 128).<sup>330</sup>

Another humorous project referencing travel that gained public exposure, via the pages of *Vogue*, was Bell and Grant’s designs for 46 Gordon Square, London, following John Maynard Keynes’ assumption of the lease in 1918. A set of cupboard doors shows the cities of Constantinople, Rome, Paris and London with lower panels depicting the breakfasts eaten in each city (Figure 129). While these images demonstrate privately the importance of European travel for the personal and professional development of Bloomsbury artists and writers and locations ripe with new and modern associations, Chris Reed maintains that in their celebration of foreign climes they in fact “suggest a sensibility attuned nostalgically- if ironically- to the fantasies and delights of pre-war European travel to historic sites of artistic accomplishments.”<sup>331</sup>

A project in a similar vein was Bell and Grant’s 1927 commission for Nan Hudson and Ethel Sand’s home in Offranville, France, the Chateau d’Auppegarde (Figures 130-134). The scenes they created in the loggia of the seventeenth century chateau showed

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<sup>329</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.154.

<sup>330</sup> Figure 139 reproduced in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.167.

<sup>331</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, pp.207-210, Figures 140 and 141 reproduced on pp.206, 208-209.

clear differences in the artists' styles, Bell choosing still pastoral subjects, Grant's offerings betraying much more movement and flow.<sup>332</sup> The scenes of harvests and haymaking celebrated the idyllic nature of French attitudes and landscapes. In this they find parallels with moods in Vanessa Bell's personal photography where she traces her own travels and residence in France and that of her family and friends.

## Conclusion

The photographic reproduction is in every sense a 'moving image.' It transposes the original image from its site of origin to stand directly before the viewer's eyes. John Berger made a similar note on the nature of art in general suggesting: "The painting enters each viewer's house. There it is surrounded by his wallpaper, his furniture, his mementoes. It enters the atmosphere of his family. It becomes their talking point. It lends its meaning to their meaning." <sup>333</sup>

This chapter has discussed how moving/travelling public images informed the work of Julia Margaret Cameron, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and their circle and how, in turn, their work and professional identities travelled into the public domain via the photographic image. The concluding section has explored how the sense of movement engendered by the photographic image finds resolution in their work via continual referencing back to earlier conventions, appropriating and opposing them in a process of active exchange. The means of travel may be physical or psychological involving an actual or conceptual journey.

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<sup>332</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 220.

<sup>333</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp.19-20.



## **CHAPTER THREE: EXPERIMENTATION AND EXCHANGE INVOLVING PRIVATE PHOTOGRAPHS**

While public images reside in the public domain, private images normally retain a more intimate circulation among family and friends. Ironically, this thesis also demonstrates how easily private images can become public, whether through scholarship, journalism or information leak. The way in which individuals or groups engage with these public and private images (through appropriation or opposition) in turn informs the formation of their own public and private identities. Since visual images promote the exchange of the individual or group with the person who made them and wider conventions, both societal and familial, they can be assimilated into wider definitions of the act of travelling and, in the framework of this discussion, travel photography.

This chapter explores issues of exchange and experimentation as they relate to personal and private photographic images. First, the chapter discusses the way in which private photography kept or taken by Bell, Grant and, by extension, Julia Margaret Cameron initiated psychological journeys engendering greater experimentation in photographic technique and inspiration for further artistic endeavours. Secondly, the outcomes of photographic exchange between Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's familial and social predecessors, between themselves and with their contemporaries are identified and compared in order to explore the impact of personal photography on the formation of Bell and Grant's private identities.

### **Travel, Experimentation and the Photographs of Julia Margaret Cameron**

Chapter One and Two of this thesis described how Julia Margaret Cameron's images were a form of travel photography first because she carried them with her when she physically travelled and secondly because she placed them in the public domain. This chapter explores Cameron's images with a very limited circulation, in effect her private photographs.

In 1875 Julia Margaret Cameron returned with her husband Charles Hay Cameron to their estates in Ceylon where they would live for the remainder of their lives, apart from a brief visit to England in 1878. Photographs taken by Cameron in Ceylon were little

circulated in her lifetime and it is thought she did not make any attempt to find a commercial market for them.<sup>334</sup> The artist Marianne North visited the Cameron's there in 1876 and 1877 and recounted: "The walls of the room were covered with magnificent photographs; others were tumbling about the tables, chairs, and floors with quantities of damp books, all untidy and picturesque."<sup>335</sup>

Julia Margaret Cameron was born in Calcutta, India in 1815 and remained there until 1848. She had met and married her colonial administrator husband Charles Hay Cameron in 1838.<sup>336</sup> After a period in England from 1848-75 the Camerons returned to Ceylon to help their three sons manage the family's now struggling coffee plantations, eventually settling in Kalutara.<sup>337</sup> Only 26 prints from this time survive and some critics have side-lined this period of Cameron's career. Helmut Gernsheim for example suggested the images were "quite unimportant...[and] could equally have been taken by an amateur."<sup>338</sup> In contrast, Victoria Olsen believes that Cameron's Ceylon photographs "demonstrate that Cameron had developed an entirely new style of photography, perhaps in adaptation of her surroundings."<sup>339</sup>

This section explores how the experience of travelling to Ceylon and working there influenced Cameron's photographic technique and demonstrates the way in which she both appropriated and opposed earlier and contemporary conventions of photography in response to her surroundings.

Julia Margaret Cameron's Ceylon photographs share with their English counterparts an interest in picturing a vision of powerful femininity. Her 1877 photograph of botanical painter Marianne North is no exception (Figure 132). Though Kanchanakesi Channa Warnapala identifies this image as appropriating aspects of the tourist photograph where "Sri Lanka is a tropical paradise for the Western traveller," the photograph at the same

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<sup>334</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.252.

<sup>335</sup> M, North, ed., *Reflections of a Happy Life, Volume I*, ed by Mrs. J. A. Symonds (London: Macmillian & Co., 1892), p. 315, see Figure 51.

<sup>336</sup> Gordon, *Roger Fenton-Julia Margaret Cameron: Early British Photographs From the Royal Collection*, p.12.

<sup>337</sup> Ford, pp. 78-79.

<sup>338</sup> Gernsheim, p.53.

<sup>339</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p. 251.

time rejects the conventions of being photographed abroad.<sup>340</sup> There is a clear interest in presenting contrasts in this image which is often found in Victorian travel photography. North is shown in studious but leisurely concentration while the young boy is standing in an awkward pose; he is standing while she appears to sit. His lack of dress contrasts with the heavy folds of her dress. The decorative edging on the light pitched veranda roof overhang contrasts with the imposing Doric columns that support it. Perhaps the juxtapositions were happenstance but they suggest something of the Victorian view of the role of the British colonial administration in bringing knowledge and order to the world. On one level the image reinforces the colonial message but it also makes an important statement about women having potentially greater freedom in the colonial environment to engage in creativity and experiences not typically open to them.<sup>341</sup> North herself noted that Cameron was “in a fever of excitement” to photograph her and spent three days attempting to do so creating four portraits.<sup>342</sup> North produced a series of paintings during the visit and the two artists undoubtedly compared and exchanged images, thereby allowing their images to travel and be viewed outside of the place of their creation.

Warnapala believes that Cameron did not circulate or exhibit her images taken in Ceylon in the same way she had actively marketed her photographs in England. Instead Warnapala suggests “she align[ed] herself with Sri Lankan culture by rejecting prevailing photographic conventions, that failed to take into account the feelings of the colonized.”<sup>343</sup> I argue that Cameron at this time was more interested in exchanging images privately and this flowed naturally from the importance always ascribed to sharing images between artists and lovers of the arts in Cameron’s circle.

Some critics have suggested that Cameron did not take many photographs in Ceylon because she was not inspired by the landscape or the people that surrounded her. Phyllis Hose suggested that Cameron found it difficult to take photographs due to lack of access

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<sup>340</sup> K. Warnapala, ‘Dismantling the Gaze: Julia Margaret Cameron’s Sri Lankan Photographs’, *Postcolonial Text*, Vol.4, No.1, 2008, p.10.

<sup>341</sup> D.S. Macleod, ‘Women’s Artistic Passages’ in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, ed by J. Pomeroy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>342</sup> M. North, *Recollections of a Happy Life Volume I*, extract reproduced in Ford, *Julia Margaret Cameron: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Photographer of Genius*, p.79.

<sup>343</sup> Warnapala, ‘Dismantling the Gaze,’ p. 12.

to the necessary chemicals and technical problems caused by the climate but also because “it seems also to be the case that the people of Sri Lanka did not have the same effect on her imagination as did the people - gentry and peasantry alike - of the Isle of Wight.”<sup>344</sup> Dianne Sachko Macleod sees in the Ceylon images Cameron’s “assertion of her scopic superiority over her subjects.”<sup>345</sup>

More sympathetic responses identify the similarities between Cameron’s English and Ceylonese photographs. Jeff Rosen suggests these images demonstrate a drawing together of “the picturesque and the primitive in a self-assured and confident manner that did not question their right to portray the subjects they chose.”<sup>346</sup> Colin Ford believes the Ceylon photographs share the same picturesque qualities as their English counterparts. He maintains that ‘the pictures exhibit exactly the same understanding of how to fill the frame with human figures, how to define their presence with careful control of light and shade and how to give them dignity.’<sup>347</sup> I argue that being physically distant from societal and photographic conventions, criticism and the commercial market in England freed Cameron to continue her technical and creative experiments in photography. She took the majority of her images out of doors while returning to favoured themes and poses she had used with sitters in England with equal interest. A juxtaposition of photographs taken in Ceylon and England demonstrates the similarities between Cameron’s English and Ceylonese photographs as evidence of this continuity of photographic technique (Figures 133-136).

Cameron’s Ceylon photographs demonstrate an appropriation of her own photographic conventions while opposing artistic and travel photography conventions in the Victorian period, particularly in her experiments with posing her sitters. Warnapala points to her assuming “the role of the photographer but not that of the spectator,” a “woman as well as a woman photographer who identifies with the colonized.”<sup>348</sup> Warnapala also suggests these images acknowledge a certain freedom on the part of the sitter because

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<sup>344</sup>P. Hose, 1998. ‘Milkmaids and Madonnas’: An Appreciation of Cameron’s Portraits of Women’ in *Julia Margaret Cameron’s Women*, ed. by S. Wolf (New Haven: Yale University Press), p.17.

<sup>345</sup> D.S. Mcleod, ‘Intrepid Women’, in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel* ed by J. Pomeroy, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.4.

<sup>346</sup> J. Rosen, ‘Cameron’s Colonized Eden: Picturesque Politics at the Edge of the Empire’ in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.110.

<sup>347</sup> Ford, p. 78.

<sup>348</sup> Warnapala, p. 14.

the Ceylonese men, women and children are often captured off-centre from the central point of the photographic frame, moving away from or beyond it.<sup>349</sup> Whether this element in Cameron's Ceylon photography is the result of a deliberate choice or a compromise based on environmental conditions or communication issues is hard to establish. Concerning Cameron's exacting attitude towards her photographic sessions it is important to note that she seemingly treated her English and Ceylonese sitters with equal and well documented severity. Marianne North noted in her memoir that Cameron:

dressed me up in flowing draperies of cashmere wool with spiky coca-nut branches running into my head, the noonday sun's rays between the leaves as the slight breeze moved them, and told me to look perfectly natural (with a thermometer standing at 96!<sup>350</sup> (Figure 137)

We can compare this to Cameron's description of the session that resulted in one of the portraits of Julia Stephen in the Charleston Collection. In a letter to William Herschel she explains the conditions of the sitting as being done "under ...circumstances of experiment – our dining room no adjustment of light – every door & every window closed, fire lit inside the room – Ice and snow outside – 4 min[ute]sittings." (Figure138).<sup>351</sup> It is evident this pose was difficult to hold, the turn of the head and neck showing definite strain. It is also significant that Cameron's level of photographic experimentation in her Ceylon photographs remained consistent with her practice in England though it might be said that the climate and lack of access to photographic equipment sometimes required her to be more experimental in her approach.

While Cameron's Ceylon photographs share commonalities with the portraits and scenes she made of English sitters there are also differences in terms of geographic location and pictorial content. While showcasing cultural difference overtly through a pervading sense of exoticism is a hallmark of Victorian travel-related photography, Cameron's Ceylonese images present this difference in a much less overt way.

This section compares Cameron's portraits produced in Ceylon with the compositional framing of photographic portraits of English sitters. It also compares the Ceylon portraits with other portraits by Cameron involving cultural difference and links them to

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., pp.14-15.

<sup>350</sup> North, *Reflections of a Happy Life Volume I*, p. 315.

<sup>351</sup> J. M. Cameron to W. Herschel, 26 February 1864, Library of Royal Society of London, in Ford, p. 46.

travel oriented images produced for the commercial market. Many of Cameron's photographs suggest how she interpreted 'otherness' within her photographic oeuvre. It is notable that Cameron over time chose to depict herself photographically as visually different to her contemporaries. A comparison of two carte de visite portraits demonstrates this. In the first image taken by the studios of Robert Faulkner in the 1860s, Cameron is shown in conventional dress demurely avoiding the camera's gaze while in the second photograph, taken by her son Herschel Hay Cameron over a decade later, she stares confidently out of the frame, head draped in an intricately worked Indian lace shawl (Figures 139-140).

Like tourist oriented carte de visites, Cameron dresses her sitters in 'un-English' costume and uses hats and head coverings to mark out social and cultural differences. One example is William Holman Hunt's 'eastern dress' in Cameron's 1864 portrait (Figure 141). Another is her image of *The Neapolitan* which shares pictorial qualities with contemporary paintings of Italian peasants which were popular with the buying and viewing public (Figure 142).<sup>352</sup> The use of props like the gun in the portrait of the *Unknown Man* dressed in Mediterranean costume (Figure 143) and the Contadina's (Italian peasant girl) bouquet (Figure 144) appear rather conventional compared to the beautiful simplicity of her portrait of a young Ceylonese girl (Figures 145-146).

In general, Cameron's little circulated and therefore, private images of Ceylonese people appear in stark contrast to the host of ethnographic images produced to satisfy a public craving for exotic images of the Empire and beyond. Kanchanakesi Channa Warnapala in her article 'Dismantling the Gaze: Julia Margaret Cameron's Sri Lankan Photographs' identifies these differences as "uprooting the native from an ethnological setting, clearly signalling a departure from visualising the native as an exhibit on display."<sup>353</sup> In many ways Cameron's Ceylonese images are comparable to her 'Great Men' series in their simplicity of composition as exemplified by her 1866 portrait of Alfred Lord Tennyson (Figure 147).

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<sup>352</sup> Hinton, *Immortal Faces: Julia Margaret Cameron on the Isle of Wight*, p. 62.

<sup>353</sup> For a detailed discussion of how Cameron's images of Ceylonese people differed extensively from the patriarchal framework of colonial photography please see Warnapala, 'Dismantling the Gaze: Julia Margaret Cameron's Sri Lankan Photographs'

Cameron's Ceylon images also constitute a type of travel photography. Like conventional travel photography produced by commercial studios, the images do present *difference*. The people are different (i.e., un-English) as are the landscape, architecture and sitters' clothing.<sup>354</sup> Yet unlike commercial photography of the period there is no immediate sense of spectacle to draw the viewer in. Rather what is apparent is that these are sharply drawn psychological portraits of real people, not idealized but uncompromisingly real. It is likely Cameron knew some of the sitters well because they worked on her estates in Kalutara. They are also travel images because they document an individual's physical transfer from one location to another, a location that is abroad. They represent a journey made and a location of settlement. That they are images of people rather than place is of no matter for it is really the people who represent the place.

### **Vanessa Bell's Experimental Technique in Travel Related Photographs**

Differences have already been noted between Vanessa Bell's early travel photography, full as it is of movement and modernity, experimental techniques and an interest in picturing the outdoors, and the travel photography produced by commercial photography studios of the previous generation. Rather than seeming like "a sequence of stills of privileged moments of French bucolic life" what is continually central to Bell's later travel photographs is movement, informality and a modern approach to documenting holidays.<sup>355</sup>

This section identifies how Bell's private snapshots tell us something about how she privately pictured 'otherness' in a geographic sense. The images focused on in this section are informal snapshots taken by Vanessa Bell and others during periods of living (usually between March and May) in St. Tropez and Cassis from 1921 until 1938.<sup>356</sup> Bell and her family first rented Maison Blanche in St. Tropez from October 1921 to January 1922 followed by a succession of properties in Cassis between 1925 and 1938,

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<sup>354</sup> Helmut Gernsheim notes that Cameron's only known landscape photograph of the waterfall at Dimbula was taken in this period. This photograph has not survived. Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*, p.83.

<sup>355</sup> Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, p.38.

<sup>356</sup> Caws and Bird Wright, *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends*, p. 214.

Les Mimosas, Villa Corsica and La Bergère.<sup>357</sup> Where Julia Margaret Cameron in some part expressed her attitude towards Ceylon through portraits of its people, Vanessa Bell captured Provencal life through its people, landscape, architecture and cultural customs which Bloomsbury embraced with gusto.

The photographs Vanessa Bell took in France in the 1920s share similarities with her earlier travel photography in that they always capture elements of structural interest, even if they are individual or group portraits. An example of this is Bell's photograph of Duncan Grant in 1928 standing outside La B erg re, The French shuttered window takes up half the photograph space and offers a counterpoint to the casually posed Grant on the right (Figure 148). A photograph of Clive Bell and Angelica Bell in 1927 shares some of the same characteristics (Figure 149). Again there is a strong interplay between light and shadow and a sense of geometry between the window bars and the chair angling in from the right. In some ways the figures seem almost incidental. They are not posed but captured in a moment of time, relaxed and informal in their holiday home. A 1928 shot of Roger Fry speaking to Angelica Bell through the window suggests a studied informality that would not have been possible in Julia Margaret Cameron's era due to the long exposure times needed to produce successful images (Figure 150). There is a sense of immediacy in the shot as if Bell had quickly crouched down, possibly slightly unbalanced to catch the moment. The viewer's eye is pulled diagonally to focus on Angelica. Fry, apparently unaware of the camera, stands relaxed but speaking intently.

Many of the letters Vanessa Bell sent during her time in France have a gastronomic focus. References to "coffee and delicious rolls and butter,"<sup>358</sup> "homemade pate, and truffles"<sup>359</sup> and meals "when we are all inclined to get slightly tipsy"<sup>360</sup> reveal how much Bell, Grant and their family and friends enjoyed life on the Mediterranean. A photograph of Angus Davidson, friend and lover of Duncan Grant and frequent visitor to both Charleston and La Berg re, certainly bears this out (Figure 151). Davidson sits

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<sup>357</sup> For a detailed discussion of Bloomsbury's experiences in France please see Caws and Bird Wright *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends*.

<sup>358</sup> V. Bell to C. Bell, 12 Oct 1921, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 254.

<sup>359</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 7 June 1928, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 335.

<sup>360</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, mid-July 1929, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 343.



in his large upturned sunhat. The evidence of emptied and half emptied wine bottles is all around him, empty to left and right and three in front just a little too lined up to be haphazard. The use of props in holiday photographs has been documented in the previous generation, for example in the photographs capturing Leslie Stephen's experiences in the Alps. Here, however, the image is far more casual.

Collectively photographs from this period show that La Bergère was certainly "Bloomsbury on the Mediterranean" as Vanessa Bell termed it.<sup>361</sup> As travel photographs they document a clear shift in what being on holiday meant. It was no longer the Grand Tour of aristocrats in the 18<sup>th</sup> century or adventures of the upper middle classes in the nineteenth century. Though still not within the orbit of the working classes foreign travel was becoming more democratised (Figure 152). Readier access to the Continent in the early twentieth century meant that greater numbers of people travelled more often and for longer periods. It was also no longer necessary to make a show of "being away." Where Bell's early travel photographs documented a still lingering presence of stiffness and formality in meeting people and dining out, the La Bergère images show how greatly things had changed. The atmosphere is more casual and friends and family are frequently shown being themselves unaware they are being photographed or, when directed by the photographer (Vanessa Bell or another), enjoying being caught in the photographer's gaze. There is no longer the same emphasis on an iconography of props to tell the story. Bell's French photographs are, indeed, a documentation of life in a home away from home.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the travel photography of different generations is the dramatic increase in the number of images made and kept resulting from technical innovations in the field. The evolution in photography equipment, most notably the invention of the Kodak Brownie in 1900, provided a camera that was easily transportable, quick to use and relatively inexpensive. There was no longer any need to document a trip or experience by visiting a commercial photographer who would produce a set number of images in a studio. Bell and Grant's generation wanted to document experiences themselves whether public or private, formal or informal.

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<sup>361</sup> V. Bell to L. Woolf, mid February 1928, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 328.

## Victorian Photographic Exchange

The private circulation of her work was important to Julia Margaret Cameron. Prior to receiving a camera from her daughter as a gift in 1864 she had compiled and given albums of images to family and friends. Most of the recipients had been part of the group of artists, writers and thinkers who gathered first at the home of Cameron's sister, Sara Princep, at Holland House and later at the Cameron's home, Dimbola, on the Isle of Wight. These included Edward Burne-Jones, William Holman Hunt and Frederic Leighton.<sup>362</sup>

As noted earlier, Cameron offered prints of her work to artists at cheaper prices. This suggests that she saw this as a defining part of the exchange of work and ideas that went on among artists and writers. She was a key part of the circle that gathered around G.F Watts at the home of her sister and brother-in-law, Sara and Thoby Princep, first in Mayfair and later at Little Holland House outside London where the artist lived and had a studio.<sup>363</sup> It was to Watts that Cameron presented her first album of collected photographs in 1857 prior to beginning to take photographs herself in 1864. He in turn modelled for and assisted Cameron in her initial experiments in staging photographs.<sup>364</sup> It is notable that Cameron always included a reproduction of the portrait Watts had painted of her as a young woman in the frontispiece of the albums of images which she presented to family and friends.<sup>365</sup> This can be seen as a mark of respect and intimacy as well as an affirmation of her belief in the equal status of photography and fine art.

Artists and photographers often collaborated on the preparatory stages of painted portraits and landscapes. In the 1880s John Everett Millais asked his photographer friend David Potter to photograph his child sitters, using the photographs as a reference to finish his intended portrait or scene.<sup>366</sup> Watts often painted from photographs and he and Cameron occasionally shared models, as well as the compositional framing and

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<sup>362</sup> Ford, pp. 34-35.

<sup>363</sup> Ford, pp. 22-25.

<sup>364</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.84.

<sup>365</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.91.

<sup>366</sup> C. Gere, *Artistic Circles: Design & Decoration in the Aesthetic Movement* (London: V & A Publishing, 2010), pp.20-21.

placement of models.<sup>367</sup> Cameron also socialised and exchanged portfolios with other amateur and professional photographers, including Sir John Herschel, O.G. Rejlander and Charles Dodgson.<sup>368</sup>

Julia Margaret Cameron not only used her photographs to establish and maintain connections with the artists and writers of her circle (many of whom she frequently pressed to sit for her) but also presented albums of the same photographs to establish a multi-viewing experience and a sense of intimacy among herself and her family who were often far away. Many of the photograph collections Cameron presented to her friends and family were infused with a sense of exoticism and they were often accompanied by other gifts. Sir Henry Taylor mentions Cameron's largesse in a letter to his father relating that she "keeps showering upon us her "barbaric pearls and gold" – India shawls, turquoise bracelets, inlaid portfolios, ivory elephants & C."<sup>369</sup> Victoria Olsen states that Cameron was just as keen on the promotion of her friends as she was interested in furthering her own career:

She was always intent on getting her celebrity friends together for mutual exchange. Often the exchanges she had in mind were intellectual debates, at other times, the exchanges seemed to be of flatteries designed to appease insecure egos or trinkets intended as relics in a growing cult of celebrity. All her life Cameron yearned for mementoes of genius...<sup>370</sup>

Cameron saw her work as "recording faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man."<sup>371</sup> Two photographs in the Charleston Collection of Julia Stephen prior to her first marriage to Herbert Duckworth suggest very different readings of the inner woman. The picturing of internal character in the image suggests a private exchange between photographer and sitter, though the first image was to become very popular among the buying public.<sup>372</sup> The first image is a conventional profile portrait

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<sup>367</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.175.

<sup>368</sup> Cameron first met Herschel in Cape Town in 1835 and enjoyed a lifelong friendship with him, O.G. Rejlander stayed with the Cameron's at Freshwater in the Spring of 1858. Julia Margaret Cameron exchanged portfolios with Charles Dodgson in the summer of 1864.

<sup>369</sup> H. Taylor to Father, H. Taylor, *Autobiography 1800-75 Volume 2* (London: Longman, Green, 1888), p.47.

<sup>370</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.81.

<sup>371</sup> Excerpt from Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House: Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, reprinted in Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p. 4.

<sup>372</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.216.

from 1867, the year in which Julia Jackson became Julia Duckworth (Figure 138). It shows Cameron's typical dramatic use of light and shadow to produce not only a visual portrait of her sitter but a psychological reading of the sitter's internal character. Here too is shown the wistful beauty that was so appealing to G.F Watts and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.<sup>373</sup> The second photograph is a far from conventional portrait (Figure 153). The intense focus on the sitter's face gives the viewer a sense of looking upon a representation of an allegorical figure; a more unconventional photographic image of femininity in the Victorian would be difficult to find. Cameron's titled this photograph *My Favourite Picture-My Niece Julia' April 1867*, although this particular print has no inscription.<sup>374</sup> It was until recently one of two remaining photographs of Julia Stephen within the Charleston Collection and there is some sense that Vanessa Bell kept this particular image for two reasons. First it was a reminder of her mother captured at a time of youthful optimism and secondly, it recognised her great-aunt's acknowledgement of it as a personal favourite.

Julia Stephen (formerly Julia Jackson then Julia Duckworth after her first marriage) sat for her aunt over fifty times and it notable how often she is portrayed in close-up or even extreme close-up. Colin Ford writes that Cameron usually used this technique only with her male sitters.<sup>375</sup> Julia's feelings regarding being a model for her aunt are not documented. Certainly there were long exposure times and often technical difficulties but the resulting photographs suggest a clear familial intimacy as well as a strong interaction between artist and model.<sup>376</sup> Julian Cox understands these images as "a controlled investigation into the moods and meditations of a young woman who was the most trusted and mutable of her subjects."<sup>377</sup>

The Charleston Collection contains a number of images that are charged with emotional feeling used to close gaps, shorten distances and re-establish relationships. Some were

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<sup>373</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p.3.

<sup>374</sup> An additional print in the National Media Museum is inscribed by Cameron, 'My Favourite Picture – My Niece Julia, April 1867,' National Media Museum. Eight photographic portraits of Julia Stephen by Julia Margaret Cameron taken between 1864 and 1872 have recently been gifted to the Charleston Collection. Further research on these images by Dr. Wendy Hitchmough is forthcoming

<sup>375</sup> Ford, *Julia Margaret Cameron- 19<sup>th</sup> Century Photographer of Genius*, p.54.

<sup>376</sup> E. Sentina, 'A Camera of Her Own: Woolf and the Legacy of the Indomitable Mrs. Cameron', *Literature Compass*, Vol.4, No.1, 2007, pp.263-270.

<sup>377</sup> Ford et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.67.

employed to exchange greetings at times of universal celebration. The carte de visite inscribed “X-mas /72, for J. Jackson from T Leekir” is such an example (Figure 154). Closing of spatial distance through photographic images is demonstrated in another carte sent to Leslie Stephen by his cousin from Sydney, Australia (Figure 155). Its inscription “For Leslie Stephen from his affectionate cousin and godfather Alfred Stephen 25 Febry 1894, born 20<sup>th</sup> Aug 1802” suggests not only an important family relationship but also family history with its references to key dates.

Portrait carte de visites with their immediacy and ease of reproduction sometimes provided real time commentary almost like verbal snapshots. For example on the reverse of a portrait of Julia Stephen Leslie Stephen wrote: “21.6.’78 – I send you this photograph of my wife who has just come in. I will write again before long” (Figure 156). As the Stephens had only married three months earlier, his pride in this incidental moment expressed through the emphasis on “*my wife*” is almost palpable.

Carte de visites performed public and private functions. Most often they were used for private communications between family and friends. In other cases they commemorated famous people and events and were collected by the public like autographs. Occasionally they acted as a publically displayed expression of private intimacy by creating an exchange not only between giver and receiver, but also receiver and viewer. All of these elements are clearly expressed in a contemporary article on the use and popularity of carte de visite albums as a communication tool. Written in 1862 by an anonymous author “The Carte de Visite” is worth quoting in full because it gives a clear demonstration of the rituals of visiting in the Victorian period and the role of the photographic image within those rituals:

Those albums were fast taking the place and doing the work of the long-cherished [visiting] card-basket. That institution has a long swing of it. It was a good thing to leave on the table that your morning- caller while waiting in the drawing-room till you were presentable, might see what distinguished company you kept, and what very unexceptional people were in the habit of coming to call on you. But the card-basket was not comparable to the album as an advertisement of your claims to gentility. The card from Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Peckham would well to the surface at times from the depths to which you had consigned it, and overlay that of your favourite countess or millionaire. Besides, you could not in some many words call attention to your card-basket as you can to your album. You place it in your friend’s hands, saying, “This only contains my special favourite, mind,” and there is her ladyship staring them in the face the next moment. “who is this sweet person?” says

the visitor. “Oh, that is dear Lady Puddicombe,” you reply carelessly. Delicious moment”!<sup>378</sup>

### **Private Photographic Exchange within the Bloomsbury Circle**

The preceding chapter explored Bell and Grant’s use of photographic reproductions of their own work and also of their contemporaries. In many cases the reproductions were working documents used for organising exhibitions or, in Clive Bell’s case, choosing illustrations for publication. It could be argued that photographic reproductions serve both public and private functions, private because they helped Bell, Grant and their contemporaries on their personal artistic journeys and public because they resulted in artworks that could be exhibited and sold.

The exchange of images between artists and individuals connected with the art world in the early twentieth century is well documented. In an article entitled “Painting and Sculpture in the 1920s”, Richard Shone points to a series of photographic exchanges between members of Bloomsbury, from Vanessa Bell to Duncan Grant, from Osbert Sitwell to Edward Wolfe and from Dora Carrington to Mark Gertler.<sup>379</sup> Some photographs were given and received as gifts, sometimes brought from a distance to be kept and looked at rather than to be written and drawn upon or splattered with paint in the studio. In this latter function they represent the private side of the photographic reproduction. As noted in Chapter Two Roger Fry was also a great collector of reproductions and during a 1916 visit to Paris he sourced reproductions of Seurat and took photographs of his own work and interior decorations commissioned from the Omega Workshops on a visit to Matisse’s studio.<sup>380</sup>

Critical avenues for exchanging ideas on art and literature during the nineteenth and early twentieth century were provided by a variety of groups who coalesced around key artists and critics of the period. In England the ‘modernists’ saw themselves as reacting consciously against the restrictive standards and conventions of the Royal Academy. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who associated with Julia Margaret Cameron through her sister Sarah’s salons at Little Holland House, reacted against the work of Grand

<sup>378</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Carte de Visite’, *All the Year Round*, No. 157, 26 April 1862, pp. 165-168, <http://www.archive.org/stream/allyearround71charrich#page/168/mode/2up/search/carte>.

<sup>379</sup> R. Shone, ‘Painting and Sculpture in the 1920s’, in *British Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1982), p.84.

<sup>380</sup> Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, p.193.

Manner painters like the Royal Academy's founder Sir Joshua Reynolds, who they humorously termed "Sir Sloshua."<sup>381</sup> Ironically, in the early twentieth century the Modernists reacted against the painted 'reality' of the Pre-Raphaelites, along with most Victorian art, which they considered repressive and backwards. Of course, this was the generation they had grown up in.

The New English Art Club (NEAC) was founded in 1885 as an alternative exhibition venue to the Royal Academy. Predominately featuring young British artists returning from study in Paris (and exposure to Impressionism) the first exhibition was mounted in April 1886 at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly.<sup>382</sup> Many NEAC members are represented in the Charleston Collection in the form of photographic reproductions, including Philip Wilson Steer, Augustus John and Walter Sickert. Both Bell and Grant exhibited with the Club.<sup>383</sup>

Artistic exchanges also occurred through the Fitzroy Street Group formed in 1907 and The Camden Town Group founded in 1911.<sup>384</sup> Both groups followed on from Walter Sickert's weekly open houses and were intended to provide a platform for artists disaffected with the NEAC. Vanessa Bell started her own exhibiting society, The Friday Club in 1905 which provided opportunities for the artists to discuss their work and ideas, as well as broader developments in the art world. In addition to Bell (then Stephen) and her friends Mary Creighton and Sylvia Milman, members included Clive Bell, Duncan Grant, John Nash, Henry Lamb and Mark Gertler. Clive Bell introduced Roger Fry to the group in 1910. Friday Club exhibitions were held in small London galleries like the Baillie and the Alpine Club galleries. After 1912 the Friday Club was replaced by the Grafton Group, an exhibiting society organised by Roger Fry.

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<sup>381</sup> S. Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1970, rpt. 2004) p. 64. See also 'Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde,' 12 September 2012 – 13 January 2013, exhibition at Tate Gallery London, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/pre-raphaelites-victorian-avant-garde>

<sup>382</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 36

<sup>383</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.84. On the Camden Town Group see Helena Bonett, Ysanne Holt, Jennifer Mundy (eds.), *The Camden Town Group in Context*, May 2012, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/introducing-the-camden-town-group-in-context-r1106438>, [accessed 10 July 2013].

<sup>384</sup> R. Marler, *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, footnote p. 116.

The Oxford and London homes of the artist Ethel Sands provided an Edwardian equivalent of a French salon, where Bell and Grant were regular guests. All these groups, open houses and resultant exhibitions provided the most fertile ground for exchanging ideas and images (photographic and painted) on latest developments in artistic practice and criticism. In this landscape where everyone tended to know everyone else or at least what they were doing cross-pollination was a common occurrence as were intense rivalries among artists and critics alike and increasingly more radical experimentation.

Bell and Grant readily exchanged personal photographs with their family and friends. Vanessa Bell in particular often gave photographs to friends and family as a form of remembrance. Similar to Julia Margaret Cameron's presentation of albums filled with the same images to members of her family who were varying distances from her, or Leslie and Julia Stephen's sending and receiving carte de visite and cabinet images, Bell's albums and the individual and series of images she sent to family and friends were meant to be looked at in a variety of ways. Maggie Humm identifies these privately exchanged images as "meeting place[s], a conversation[s], aide-memoires, and sometimes mechanisms of survival and enticement."<sup>385</sup>

There are numerous references in Vanessa Bell's private letters pointing to photographs being used in this way. Writing to John Maynard Keynes in November 1921 from the south of France Bell reminded Keynes "to give my love to Sebastian and give him a photograph of himself from me. I mean to write and thank him for all his efforts with the children."<sup>386</sup> When her son Julian took the post of professor of English at the National University of Wuhan in Hankow China, Bell's letters with their accompanying photographs are clearly meant to bridge the physical distance between China and Charleston and psychological distance between mother and son.

A letter written by Bell the day after Julian's departure is particularly telling in its desire to connect the reader with the sights and sounds of the mundane, of trying to find ordinariness in the face of extraordinary events: "I drove Duncan to catch his train" and

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<sup>385</sup> Humm, 2002, *Modernist Women and Visual Culture: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Visual Culture*, p.47.

<sup>386</sup> V. Bell to J.M Keynes, 21 November 1921, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 259.



“[I] was almost drowned, there was such a terrific deluge.”<sup>387</sup> The two photographs included with this letter bare visual witness to the conditions, “The small pond is already quite full”, thereby keeping Julian a part of day to day life. Bell’s reference to “all those I did of you haven’t been developed yet” in this letter likely recalled two half humorous images of Julian in a safari suit and pith helmet and holding a shotgun battle ready for the exotic east (Figure 157).<sup>388</sup> The visual contrast between Julian, tall, young and confident and Bell who in her dark dress seems to shrink into the garden and the facade of the Charleston farmhouse is clear. There is also a striking contrast in these playful images between Julian gun in hand against the rather pastoral background of the pond.

### Public/Private Photographs

Letters exchanged between Duncan Grant and John Maynard Keynes following a holiday together in Greece and Turkey in 1910 demonstrates the fine line that often exists between photographs for public and/or private consumption (Figure 158).<sup>389</sup>

Duncan Grant to John Maynard Keynes, letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1910: “Many thanks for the latest bundle of photographs, I think one of the views of the temple very good and 2 or 3 of Tunisia ones.”<sup>390</sup>

John Maynard Keynes to Duncan Grant, letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1910: “...I enclose some photographs of Constantinople, I should like them back.”<sup>391</sup>

John Maynard Keynes to Duncan Grant, letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1910: “I have had some more photographs printed including some grand ruins of Burse which are rather good. Can you send me back the pictures of Constantinople?”<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> V. Bell to J. Bell, 29 August 1935, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 395.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> The following photographs are reproduced in Humm, 2006, *Snapshots of Bloombury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, p.105.

<sup>390</sup> D. Grant to J.M. Keynes, 10 June 1910, J.M. Keynes, *Letters to Duncan Grant Volume II*, British Library, Additional Manuscript, M.S 5793OB, No.113.

<sup>391</sup> J.M Keynes to D. Grant, 13 August 1910, J.M. Keynes, *Letters to Duncan Grant Volume II*, British Library, Additional Manuscript M.S 5793OB, No.95-96.

<sup>392</sup> J.M Keynes to D. Grant, 13 Aug, 1910, J.M. Keynes, *Letters to Duncan Grant Volume II*, British Library, Additional Manuscript M.S 5793OB, No.101

Duncan Grant to John Maynard Keynes, letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1910: “I am returning your photographs. I shall bring an album when I do come to Burford and I hope you will be able to make duplicates of them. I intend to put them in order with their dates. I think it will be amusing to look at them in a few years, although to one already the whole thing seems...years ago.”<sup>393</sup>

John Maynard Keynes to Duncan Grant, letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1910: “I developed Apollo in his temple at Bassae yesterday and printed him today. He is lovely. I will send you some prints as soon as they are fixed and toned.”<sup>394</sup>

John Maynard Keynes to Duncan Grant, letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1910: “Here are the Bassae photographs – there is one more that I haven’t printed...Please send me a list of the people I may show them to.”<sup>395</sup>

These letters demonstrate the public/private position that snapshots of this kind occupy. Some are intimate images, as are the above examples of Grant at Asheham in 1912-14, yet while Keynes indicates he understands the need for discretion in whom he shares the images with he characterizes the image in the public terms of a photographic reproduction. Grant is not Grant but Apollo. Grant’s response: “You must say that it was a shepherd or something and that no-one wears clothes in Arcadia” bears out this reading.<sup>396</sup> These letters highlight several important points. They document Grant and Keynes’s traditional approach to travel photography whereby images of foreign places must be appropriately dated, labelled and placed in albums for public consumption. In this they bring to mind the delicately wrapped views of India by Samuel Bourne and Watts and Skeens which belonged to an earlier age. The letters also suggest there is an intensely private back story that exists behind the images that will only be apparent to one or two intimates. In this arena they are private images.

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<sup>393</sup> D. Grant to J.M. Keynes, 10 June 1910, J.M. Keynes, *Letters to Duncan Grant Volume II*, British Library, Additional Manuscript M.S 5793OB, No.112

<sup>394</sup> J.M. Keynes to D. Grant, 30 May 1910, J.M. Keynes *Letters to Duncan Grant Volume II*, British Library, Additional Manuscript M.S 5793OB, No.82

<sup>395</sup> J.M. Keynes to D. Grant, 6 June 1910, J.M. Keynes *Letters to Duncan Grant Volume II*, British Library, Additional Manuscript M.S 5793OB, No.85

<sup>396</sup> D. Grant to J.M. Keynes, 2 June 1910, J.M. Keynes *Letters to Duncan Grant Volume II*, British Library, Additional Manuscript M.S 5793OB, in Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p. 95.

Duncan Grant is known to have taken several nude photographic and portrait studies of the mountaineer George Mallory whom he had met in 1912 through Lytton Strachey. In fact he remained in contact with Mallory until his death on a third expedition to Everest in 1924. Like the photographs that Grant and Maynard Keynes exchanged, Grant shared the photographs of Mallory with Keynes in January 1912 (Figure 159).<sup>397</sup>

### **Photographic Reproductions, Immediacy and Multi-Exchange**

Other photographic images in the Charleston Collection are inscribed to recipients in much the same way as the carte de visite and cabinet portraits used by previous generations. It is quite easy to imagine that the note containing Christmas greetings from Duncan Grant on the back of a reproduction of *Dessin L'Estompe* by Matisse was quickly scribbled on the first thing to hand (Figure 160). It is unrecorded who Teddy was but the inscription gives possible clues to its provenance.<sup>398</sup> In December 1924 Grant had been touring the canals of France with his mother and Aunt Daisy McNeil on the latter's Dutch barge. The journey took them from Dijon to Verdun and finally to Beaune where Grant stayed to paint alone before travelling home via Paris.<sup>399</sup> It is plausible that he picked up this folio of photographic reproductions entitled *l'Art d'Aujourd'hui* published by noted fine art publisher Albert Morance in 1924 during this journey.

In some instances, far from being a source of inspiration for Bell and Grant reproductions simply provided material to sketch or draw upon, most likely because they were readily available and stacked in piles about the studio at Charleston. Two examples of this usage include a reproduction printed by Lemercier of *Venus Epithalamia* by Edward Burne-Jones (1871) (Figure 162) and a large scale reproduction of Albrecht Durer's *A Peasant and his Wife* (circa 1497-98) (Figure 161) printed by Bisson Brothers, Paris. Each has sketches of nude figures by Duncan Grant on the reverse.

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<sup>397</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, pp.116-118.

<sup>398</sup> 'Teddy,' could possibly refer to Edward Wolfe (1897-1982) who was employed at the Omega Workshops in 1918, exhibited with Bell and Grant and was a visitor to Charleston.

<sup>399</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p. 262.

## Picture Postcard Sentiments: Public/Private Travelling Exchanges

The nature of 'modern' communication often falls between the public and private domain and is sometimes instantaneous and increasingly abbreviated. Carte de visite and cabinet photographs performed this function in the Victorian period but were slowly superseded by another development related to travel and tourism, the picture postcard. First produced in 1872, thirteen years after the carte de visite was patented, picture postcards similarly contained elements of informality and intimacy in equal measure.<sup>400</sup> Through this medium the sender is able to communicate some part of the experience of viewing the landscape, building or work of art though not with the immediacy of seeing the original. The message recorded by the sender on the back alleviates this in some circumstances by describing personal reactions to the object depicted by communicating the message "I was here and this is what I saw." Alternatively, the message might be an entirely personal one completely unconnected to the image on the front.

Bloomsbury's shared vision of modernism and the art historical tradition is to be found in the Charleston Collection the form of postcards. Key among the repeated motifs is the primacy of French culture, art and architecture. Roger Fry had written in the introduction to the Exhibition of French Primitives in 1904: "We owe to France what is perhaps the most important and most original movement in figurative art that Europe has witnessed since the efflorescence of Greek sculpture...."<sup>401</sup> Postcards sent to Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Clive Bell of details of the exteriors of cathedrals such as Chartres and Autun bear witness that French art and architecture were a lasting influence and interest for Bloomsbury (Figure 163). Another repeated motif among postcards in the Charleston Collection is that of earlier western and non-western traditions. Clive Bell asserted the importance of primitive art in his 1914 publication *Art*: "As a rule primitive art is good...for as a rule, it is also free of descriptive qualities. In primitive art you will find no accurate representation; you will only find significant form. Yet no art moves us so profoundly."<sup>402</sup> A post card addressed to Duncan Grant in the Charleston Collection of the cave paintings at Lascaux bears out this statement as does his sending of a postcard to John Maynard Keynes in 1913 of the mosaics at

<sup>400</sup> B. Michaels, 'The Rise and fall of the carte de visite', *Afterimage*, Vol.13, April 1986, pp.8-9.

<sup>401</sup> R. Fry, 'The Exhibition of French Primitives, Part II', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, (Vol.5, No.15, 1904), p.279.

<sup>402</sup> C. Bell, London: Chatto and Windus, 1914, rpt. Champaign: Book Jungle, 2008), p. 19-20.

Ravenna on which he enthused “This is much better place than Venice. It is full of things like this.”<sup>403</sup>

Each of these postcards evidences the shared interest of Bloomsbury artists, critics and associates to re-evaluate past traditions and find a continued source of inspiration in them. In the context of exchange these images with their abbreviated written messages imply an acknowledgement between sender and receiver of the shared artistic culture that Bloomsbury formulated. One postcard dated 1962 from Joan Sewell to Clive Bell (two years before his death) speaks to Bell’s continued critical influence on the art world (Figure 164). Following news that an important tapestry had been brought to France she wrote: “I can’t help feeling that your letter to the Times may have been largely instrumental in its being unrolled and examined in France.”

Other postcards addressed to Duncan Grant in the 1970s can be understood as a homage from a younger generation to the elder, at once respectful and playful. The postcards from Simon Watney and Richard Morphet demonstrate an awareness on the part of the senders of the shared language of signs they shared with Grant. The affection these younger followers of Bloomsbury held for Grant is very clear. Richard Morphet had been steadily involved with rehabilitating Grant’s career from the early 1960s while Simon Watney became acquainted with Grant in 1969 when a student of Quentin Bell’s at the University of Sussex.<sup>404</sup>

Watney and Morphet documented a journey framed in the context of art historical interest, keenly aware of the personal tastes of their audience. Similar to *carte de visites* which often used age and date as marks suggesting the wisdom and respectability of the sender, Richard Morphet employed a similar technique in jest when referring to Duncan Grant’s longevity of age and career. On a 1972 postcard to Grant he wrote “Here is a reproduction of a Van Gogh picture painted when you were two years old; it is very small but extraordinary!” (Figure 165). Simon Watney’s postcard, also dated 1972, picturing Ruben’s *Erection of the Cross* (1610) was written conversationally but specifically in terms of its art historical orientation: “Dear Duncan, Here is the Great

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<sup>403</sup> D. Grant to J.M. Keynes, 30 April 1913, in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.136.

<sup>404</sup> Spalding, 1997, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, London: Pimlico, p. 446S, Watney, 1990, *The Art of Duncan Grant*, London: John Murray, p. 13-14. Conversations with the author

Rubens in the Cathedral here at Antwerp. I've just visited his house – it is rather as if a corner of the Boboli Gardens has picked up and flown north in the manner of the Holy House of Loreto.”

Underneath the light-hearted banter of these two postcards is a sense of respect and recognition of Grant's importance, and that of Bloomsbury as a whole, in the development of English modernism. Indeed Morphet and Watney later wrote extensively on the subject. For his part, Grant held great affection for these postcards and sometimes incorporated them into his work. Today they are placed on the mantelpiece in the studio at Charleston. This shows further evidence of how the collection of photographic images and fine art reproductions at Charleston often became a starting point for new artistic journeys.

### **The Interior Journey**

The discussion of commercially produced photographic images has concentrated primarily on travel in the physical sense, documenting the location of photographers' studios, the locations depicted and the journeys of those who sent them. Just as important the images also trace deeper psychological journeys, strengthening familial connections and friendships and exciting feelings of love, grief and other emotions. Here they represent a very different kind of travel photography. This section identifies ways in which psychological journeys through photography were experienced by the generation preceding Bell and Grant and explores how Bell and Grant used photographic images to connect with their own individual and joint pasts as inspiration for artistic projects.

### **Personality and Place in Victorian Photographs in the Charleston Collection**

While carte de visites and cabinet images can capture fleeting moments and communicate experiences in a process of exchange they can also take the viewer on an emotional journey as a substitute for travelling to the physical place. This is the most probable explanation for a series of three carte de visite, and two larger scale images of Herbert Duckworth's grave. Julia Jackson had been married to Herbert Duckworth for three years and was pregnant with her third child at the time of his sudden death from an

undiagnosed abscess in 1870 (Figures 166-167).<sup>405</sup> Picturing not only the grave but the landscape surrounding the graveyard, these images stand almost wholly alone among the Victorian photographs in the Charleston Collection in not being taken in a studio. The charged nature of the photographs is uncommon and speaks to the depth of Julia Stephen's grief for her first husband and the potential power of a photographed location to take the viewer on an emotional journey. The delicate physical condition of the full size images suggests they were looked at and handled repeatedly as a visual substitute for the physical place of mourning.

Julia Stephen was born in 1846 in India where her father, John Jackson, was employed as a medical doctor in Calcutta.<sup>406</sup> Though she returned to London with her mother, Maria Pattie Jackson, in 1848 to join her three elder siblings she made several journeys to aid her mother's poor health. Popular health spa destinations in Switzerland and Italy were visited in 1862 and it was during this lengthy tour that Julia met her first husband Herbert Duckworth (d. 1870).<sup>407</sup> When she and Leslie Stephen married in 1878, Julia's journeys remained consistently within England excepting a lengthy trip to Switzerland in 1889.<sup>408</sup> Her travels from this time until her death were of two distinct but often overlapping types. Family holidays, most often to Cornwall, were a central part of every year but were often combined with Julia's professional abilities as a nurse due to Leslie Stephen's suffering increasing bouts of anxiety over his overwhelming task of editing the *Dictionary of National Biography* (begun in 1885) and administering to the local population.<sup>409</sup> Even when not on holiday Julia seemed always on call particularly for family members. Between 1878 and 1887 she nursed her uncle Thoby Princep, her sister Adeline Vaughan and her father John Jackson in their final illnesses and throughout this time went down to Brighton, usually once a month, to look after her mother until her death in 1892.<sup>410</sup> Yet Julia's life was also a richly social one. She hosted "at homes" every other Sunday from 1879 onwards and Leslie Stephen recollected that "though we did not try to set up a literary or artistic 'salon', I can see

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<sup>405</sup> Gillespie and Steele (eds.), *Julia Duckworth Stephen: Stories for Children, Essays for Adults*, p.7.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., p.xviii.

<sup>408</sup> Bicknell (ed.), *Selected Letters of Leslie Stephen Vol 1*, p.293.

<sup>409</sup> Gillespie and Steele (eds.), *Julia Duckworth Stephen: Stories for Children, Essays for Adults*, p.21.

<sup>410</sup> Bicknell, *Selected Letters, Volume 1*, pp. 221-225, *Volume 2*, pp.290-294.

her surrounded on such occasions by a very lively and pleasant group.”<sup>411</sup> Diane Gillespie, one of the editors of a collection of Julia’s children’s stories and adult orientated essays, suggests that “it is difficult to see Julia Stephen, apart from her relationships to other people.”<sup>412</sup> This is particularly true when Julia Stephen’s relationship to photography is considered. Though there are photograph albums assembled by her daughter Stella Duckworth and second husband Leslie Stephen, no collation of photographs bears the identified hand of Julia Stephen herself.

Photographs played an important role in Leslie Stephen’s *Mausoleum Book*, a memoir of his and Julia’s lives begun in the weeks following her death in 1895. The manuscript written for the children of her first and second marriages was to be read and reflected on with the accompanying photographs. Stephen noted privately almost a month after he started writing: “I copied this out and mean to have the copy bound in a volume with some photographs...”<sup>413</sup> That the photographs acted as an important vehicle for Stephen’s mental journey back to happy times spent with his wife is undoubted (Figure 168). He writes of the powerful effect of certain photographs on his thoughts and feelings:

When I look at certain little photographs – at one in which I am reading by her side at St. Ives [taken by Vanessa Bell] with Virginia in the background, at the one by Henry Cameron with Virginia on her lap – I see as with my bodily eyes the love, the holy and tender love which breathes through those exquisite lips, and I know the later years were a deep strong current of calm inward happiness, the trials, so to speak, merely floating accidents on the surface.<sup>414</sup>

## **The Convergence of Past and Present Psychological Journeys**

Bell and Grant often looked at and discussed old family photographs. For example, Bell mentioned in a letter to Clive Bell in December 1912 that Grant had come and “talked in a desultory but cheering way of the *Mausoleum Book*.”<sup>415</sup> Reviewing the past was particularly prevalent in the Stephen family, exemplified by Leslie Stephen’s

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<sup>411</sup> Stephen, *Sir Leslie Stephen’s Mausoleum Book*, p.62.

<sup>412</sup> Gillespie and Steele (eds.), *Julia Duckworth Stephen: Stories for Children, Essays for Adults*, p.3.

<sup>413</sup> Stephen, *Sir Leslie Stephen’s Mausoleum Book*, xiii, British Library, Additional Manuscript MS.57921, f. 1.

<sup>414</sup> Stephen, *Sir Leslie Stephen’s Mausoleum Book*, p.59.

<sup>415</sup> V. Bell to D. Grant, 1912, 27 December 1912 reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.131.



*Mausoleum Book*, Virginia Woolf's constant meditations on family and in particular her mother, in her public and private writing and Vanessa Bell's use of many of Julia Margaret Cameron's techniques in her painting and personal photography. Maggie Humm suggests that Bell and Woolf's going over of the past via the medium of photography represents "a need to critically relate to the past by working through representations of the present."<sup>416</sup> It is clear this working through played out in movement, physically and mentally connecting and reconnecting with people and places.

Previous chapters have traced the way Bell, Grant and previous generations of their families used photographic images as substitutes for physical journeys to places and people holding artistic inspiration or familial importance. Photographs also encouraged psychological journeys where reverberations of the past were frequently present an element often identified in Bell and Grant's work. Richard Morphet, for example, notes that at Charleston, their Sussex home, "European art of the past seems alive, both through actual images from earlier centuries and through their indirect presence in Bloomsbury paintings and decorations. At the same time the house has a French feel. When an environment merges these qualities with those already described, the result is a world that seems quite other."<sup>417</sup> In what ways did these photographic/psychological exchanges between object and individual and between past and present occur? Certainly the journey took many guises. As noted earlier, Maggie Humm acknowledges that they acted as "Meeting place[s]...conversation[s]...[and] aide-memoires."<sup>418</sup>

In Bell and Grant's photographs and paintings two primary interests connected with photography are apparent, an interest in proving familial likeness in terms of both physical appearance and creative output and a linking of past and present artistic traditions.

### **Demonstrating Familial Ties Through Photography**

Throughout her career Vanessa Bell painted many still lifes and interior scenes. In fact, the depiction of private space and everyday life provided a central theme for Bell, Grant

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<sup>416</sup> Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, p.4.

<sup>417</sup> Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant*, p.33.

<sup>418</sup> Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Culture*, p. 47

and many of their modernist contemporaries. These representations provided a window on the mind much like the use of stream of consciousness and interior monologue in contemporary modernist writing. The focus on greater psychological realism was also reactive against the restrictive standards and outdated conventions of the Royal Academy.

*Still Life of Flowers in a Jug* (Figure 169) painted by Vanessa Bell between 1948 and 1950 is a work which centralises the photograph in her artistic process. The photograph in the painting communicates an intensely private meaning. Since the original taken by her great-aunt Julia Margaret Cameron and the sitter is her long deceased mother the image initiates a journey to a complex psychological place involving, an inner exploration of and identification with the photograph's subject. As such, the depiction of the photograph can be viewed as travel photography because of the inner journey it initiates.

There are two potential reference points in the Charleston Collection for the image of Julia Stephen that Bell depicted in this painting.<sup>419</sup> Both images were taken in 1867 prior to Julia Jackson's marriage to Herbert Duckworth. Each is distinctly different. The first image, entitled variously as *Julia Jackson* or *My Niece Julia* (Figure 153) is an extreme soft focused close-up of the sitter, simply dressed with her hair free and barely contained within the photographic frame. The second photograph entitled *Mrs. Herbert Duckworth* (Figure 138) is far more and modest and restrained though the categorisation of the photograph as a respectable depiction of an engaged young woman is nullified by the drama of light and shadow that permeates the image. It is arguable that Bell used both of these photographs as reference points because each encompasses a different aspect of her mother, her great-aunt's photographic style and her own relationship with these elements. The following analysis of the role of Cameron's photographs in Bell's *Still Life with Flowers in a Jug* identifies aspects of both photographs that may have contributed to the composition.

Bell gives the photograph a monumentality and centrality in her composition. She places Cameron's image dominantly across the foreground and uses another photograph or print rolled in paper to allow the image to span horizontally back into the

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<sup>419</sup> Ford, *Julia Margaret Cameron: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Photographer of Genius*, p.54.

composition. Bell connects the solidity of the jug with the permanence and weight of the captured photograph. Light and shadow are used to connect these two objects, the play of light cast on the jug similar to the effect produced in Cameron's images. Victoria Olsen suggests in the *Mrs Herbert Duckworth* photograph Cameron used light to highlight the beauty of Julia Jackson's profile and consciously "cropped and cut the photograph into an oval shape, which emphasizes the semi-circular rings of lace and trim at Jackson's collar."<sup>420</sup> The roundness of the photograph in the painting and the light cast on the jug creates a sense of movement, suggesting the flash of the camera or the sudden appearance of sunlight. Yet the movement suggested by the shape of the photograph and the burst of colour from the bouquet placed in the jar is grounded in the calmness and serenity of the overall muted colour scheme.

The content of Vanessa Bell's composition in *Still Life with Flowers in a Jug* can be understood as a meditation on past and present, familial ties and contrasts between nature and artifice. Considering the second Cameron photograph as a reference point for Bell's painting it is possible to draw a comparison between the constructed naturalness of Cameron's earthy image of *Julia Jackson* and the bouquet of flowers, a product of nature artfully and tightly arranged within the composition. Christopher Reed suggests that Bell's inclusion of flowers could be representative of her attempt to subvert the Victorian interest in floral symbolism so apparent in Cameron's work and that of her contemporaries.<sup>421</sup> The painting certainly shows an interest in the previous generation but arguably it is one of admirable recognition but not full acceptance, in other words appropriation and opposition. Bell's private identifications with her matrilineal heritage are present in this work. Referencing two very distinct images of her mother by Cameron, she acknowledges different aspects of her mother's character, that strange loveliness which "thrilled to the core" represented in Cameron's *My Niece Julia* image, and her "beauty of soul, refinement, nobility and tenderness of character" so evident in the photograph entitled *Mrs. Herbert Duckworth*.<sup>422</sup>

These contrasts are clearly echoed in Angelica Garnett's prologue to a collection of Vanessa Bell's memoirs:

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<sup>420</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p. 202.

<sup>421</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p. 26.

<sup>422</sup> Stephen, *Sir Leslie Stephen's Mausoleum Book*, pp. 32-33.

Seen through the lens of her aunt's camera, Julia (who was frequently photographed by her) appears as upright, statuesque and infinitely noble or loose-haired, passionate and dionysiac. Extraordinarily different though they are, both manifestations are equally powerful, leading one to speculate about a personality that remains comparatively mysterious...And yet she could captivate people by her gift as a story-teller and was obviously not lacking in ordinary common sense.<sup>423</sup>

Interestingly, Annie Thackeray, the sister of Leslie Stephen's first wife, described Cameron in similarly contrasting terms as an energetic, impulsive, artistic woman who was "generous, unconventional, loyal and unexpected" yet created images which "resonated with calm forbearance."<sup>424</sup> In highlighting these characteristics Bell clearly aligns herself with her great-aunt and suggests that she too admires and shares these qualities.

In addition to this private identification with Julia Margaret Cameron and her mother that Bell emphasizes in *Still Life with Flowers in a Jug*, her awareness of her continuing role in her matrilineal artistic heritage is also present. In particular Bell aligns her work with Cameron's in a wider sense by establishing connections between the processes of art and photography. Placement of the photograph in the foreground of her work next to the jar of flowers suggests that photography was just as natural an art as painting, stemming as it did from the fertile ground of the creative mind. This is further suggested the way in which Bell equates the permanence of Cameron's photographic image with the still life genre. Christopher Reed suggests that Bell's use of abstraction in the background of her composition "undermines Cameron's figurative authority" but the connecting lines between Cameron's photographic image and the abstract pattern via the rolled photographic image suggests rather that past and present are linked and share similar qualities in their interest in creating a different, fresh approach to representation whether figurative or abstract.<sup>425</sup>

Vanessa Bell's *Still Life with Flowers in a Jug* demonstrates the role of photography in her artistic process and her personal journey as a woman and mother. Julia Margaret Cameron's photographic images of Bell's mother may be seen as continual reference points and signposts on that route. Bell's still life represents an artist in her maturity, looking back to that location, both psychologically and physically, that gave her

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<sup>423</sup> A. Garnett, 'Prologue', in Bell, *Sketches in Pen and Ink: A Bloomsbury Notebook*, p.15.

<sup>424</sup> A. Thackeray, in Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p. 80.

<sup>425</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p. 26.

elementary inspiration in Cameron's photographs, the artistic boldness to reduce her work to its simplest forms through painting, and finally to arrive at a place that combines the two art forms together as she does here.

Arguably one of the overriding concerns in Bell's own photographic technique is the relationship between form, line and texture rather than producing rigid depictions of people and world around her. This is perhaps the reason why she created "so many awful, blurred snapshots of themselves, clothes dishevelled, eyes half-shut, hair drooping into their mouths."<sup>426</sup> Her interest in irregularities in both her painted and photographic images is strongly communicated in *Still Life with Flowers in a Jar* and this painting documents the different routes by which Bell arrived at artistic resolution and satisfaction through time suggesting a full circle personal and artistic journey.

As well as drawing on Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs in her painted and clearly more public works Vanessa Bell's private photography also traces her desire to form and maintain connections with previous generations through the photographic image. When Bell escaped to 46 Gordon Square with her siblings following the death of Leslie Stephen in 1904, one aspect of Victorianism took pride of place in the hall, photographs by Cameron of some of her 'Famous Men' and five of Julia Stephen. She described the hang as follows: "On the right side...a row of celebrities: 1. Herschel – Aunt Julia's photograph. 2. Lowell. 3. Darwin. 4. Father. 5. Tennyson, 6. Browning. 7. Meredith – Watts' portrait. Then on the opposite side...five of the best of Aunt Julia's photographs of Mother."<sup>427</sup> This suggests that Bell had a number of visual exchanges in mind. Primarily her aim was to highlight the collective worth of the images: 'They look very beautiful all together.'<sup>428</sup> However, it is possible to read an implied alliance with Julia Margaret Cameron's more experimental approach to photography compared with more standardized forms of portraiture. Perhaps there is even a hint of glee in Bell's tone at her audacity in placing these images of the previous generation on the stark white walls of her new home.

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<sup>426</sup> Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell* p. xx.

<sup>427</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 1 November 1904, reproduced in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.23.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

Familial references in Bell and Grant's work are present on both a conscious and subconscious level. Bell's 1929 work *The Red Dress* is Bell's most direct translation of her great-aunt's artistic vision (Figure 170). She remarked in a letter to her son Quentin in March 1934 following the mounting of her solo exhibition at the Lefevre Gallery in London:

*It is of course horrifying to see all one's own works laid out like corpses and makes one feel exposed to the world...but toward the end of the morning Mrs Curtis appeared, so enthusiastic that, though she's such a flighty woman one can't think she knows much about it, still it was very encouraging. Especially as she bought one! A portrait of my mother done from an old photograph.*<sup>429</sup>

Chris Reed suggests that the changes Bell made to photographic images in their painted translation (e.g. the plumper features) are closer to "the generic females in [her] contemporary decorative work."<sup>430</sup> Yet it is worth noting that Cameron's portraits of Julia also bear a closer resemblance to Vanessa Bell as a young woman (Figure 171).<sup>431</sup> Similarly, facial similarities to Bell are also apparent in Duncan Grant's *Portrait of Mrs. Leslie Stephen* (1934) (Figure 172) when compared to Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs of Julia Stephen as a young woman (Figure 173). If he had indeed used Cameron's images as a reference point, his letters suggest it was not the first time. In a letter to Bell dating from 1930 he writes: "I have been painting all day a copy of your Aunt Cameron's picture of Joachim and his fiddle. It is a marvellous thing and I find it fascinating to try and paint it. But I see it will be very difficult to do anything as good as the original."<sup>432</sup> Vanessa Bell also used the photographs to play with the concept of familial inheritance. According to her son Quentin, Bell was "always trying to prove

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<sup>429</sup> V. Bell to Q. Bell, 3 May 1934, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 377. See Figure 83 for the Cameron photograph on which this portrait is based. Julia Margaret Cameron, 1864, *Julia Jackson*, Albumen print from wet collodion-on-glass negative, Height: 24.6 cm image, Width: 19.2 cm image, Height: 38 cm image, Width: 28.5 cm image, Victoria and Albert Museum, Museum.

<sup>430</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.25.

<sup>431</sup> Interestingly a portrait by Jacques Emile also based on the same Cameron photograph, was sold at auction in 1959 as 'Portrait of Virginia Woolf' which also underlines the concept of visual familial inheritance: Jacques Emile Blanche, *Julia Princep Stephen*, Oil on Canvas, 92.50 cm x 73.50 cm, Government Art Collection.

<sup>432</sup> D. Grant to V. Bell, 18 February 1930, Charleston Papers, Accession # SxMs56, DGVB 350 (3), University of Sussex.

there was a likeness” between Angelica and her maternal grandmother Julia Stephen (Figure 174).<sup>433</sup>

Duncan Grant had an equal fascination for old photographs as a letter from August 1920 to Vanessa Bell demonstrates. Written while staying at his parent’s home, Grant’s letter relates his experience of sleeping in the bedroom of Mrs Elwes, the companion of his Aunt Daisy. His interest is clearly evident in his description of the room’s decor of “an early prieu dieu and crucifix over it and many devotional pictures mixed with family relics and fascinating photographs of her dead sister – one of which is exquisite of its period – the early 80s.”<sup>434</sup> In another letter dated Christmas 1925 Grant tells Bell he had been looking at family photographs and found “certain likenesses to myself” in a photograph of his father (Figures 175-176)<sup>435</sup> On the whole letters by Bell and Grant suggest that they were interested in family photographs and the memories attached to them, both from a standpoint of reaching a greater understanding of personal backgrounds and identities as well as artistic inspiration. That Grant would take the time to find a photographic reproduction of his ancestors suggests that he was interested in having ready access to images of his family.

The Charleston Collection contains a number of painted and photographic portraits of Grant’s family members. Many of the photographs came into Grant’s possession on the death of his mother Ethel in 1948. It is possible that all of the Grant family images came to Charleston at this time. Grant also possessed silhouettes of Richard Chicheley Plowden and his wife Sophia Elizabeth Plowden, his Grandmother’s father’s parents, and grandmother Henrietta Plowden, which he mounted himself.<sup>436</sup> Grant later used the silhouette of his grandmother in a still-life painting. (Figures 177-180).

Angelica Garnett wrote of Grant’s constant exchange between past and present as follows:

His imagination teemed with possibilities of an exotic nature constantly demanding expression. In order to give reality to such a vision he created his own surroundings, and lived both in and with them, changing and recording as both he

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<sup>433</sup> Bell and Garnett (eds.), *Vanessa Bell’s Family Album*, p. 102.

<sup>434</sup> D. Grant to V. Bell, undated letter, British Library, DGV66 (2) 80.10.5.1122.

<sup>435</sup> D. Grant to V. Bell, 1925, reproduced in Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.266.

<sup>436</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, pp.8, 121, 358.

and they changed with time. Either in Fitzroy Square or at Charleston he could maintain a running conversation between past and a present that, often reflected in mirrors, was repeated and transformed into a new present. One illuminated the other.<sup>437</sup>

Photography played an early role in Duncan Grant's artistic education and outlook and continued to do so throughout his career. His first introduction to works by Whistler and Degas were through photographs and reproductions while a student at Westminster School of Art in 1902 and this fuelled his desire to "go out into the world...to learn all there is to know and be seen in the world of painting."<sup>438</sup> Grant's later still life paintings that include photographs or photographic reproductions arguably represent, with their photographic allusions to acquaintances and artistic inspirations of the past, a meditation on Grant's full circle journey as an artist. This section examines Grant's stylistic placement of photographs in his paintings and situates the use of these in relation to the genre of travel photography.

Duncan Grant's still life paintings give the viewer a sense of his artistic process. Richard Morphet suggests that these works bring "the viewer closer to the artist's mind at work."<sup>439</sup> Simon Watney states that they show a "self-consciousness emphasis on the process of painting itself."<sup>440</sup> An analysis of Duncan Grant's work *Still life with a Photograph of Nijinsky* (1972) demonstrates the centrality of the photographic image in bringing the elements of the composition together (Figure 181).

The photograph, of famed principal dancer of *Les Ballet Russes* Vaslav Nijinsky, that Grant included in his still life painting remains in the studio at Charleston where the work was conceived. In considering how the photograph works within the composition it is useful to note that the image was one of a series produced in 1910 by Parisian photographer Eugene Druet for the artist Jacques Emile Blanche to enable him to paint a portrait of Nijinsky in costume (Figure 182).<sup>441</sup> Notably Grant was a student of

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<sup>437</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.41.

<sup>438</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, and D. Grant, 'Paris Memoir', (unpublished manuscript) *Personal Papers of the artist 1880s -1978*. Tate Gallery Archives 20078.

<sup>439</sup> R. Morphet, 'Image and Theme in Bloomsbury Art', in Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant*, p.34.

<sup>440</sup> Watney, *The Art of Duncan Grant*, p.34.

<sup>441</sup> J. Fraser, 'Nijinsky Photographs and Photographers', *Dance Chronicle*, Vol.7, No.4, 1984-1985, pp.435-474.



Blanche's school *La Palette* in Paris from 1906 to 1907 and it possible that he was aware of the photographs and requested one from Blanche following his first exciting encounter with *Les Ballet Russes* in London in the summer of 1911. Writing about the 2011 exhibition at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery entitled "Radical Bloomsbury: The Art of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell, 1905-1925," Janet McKenzie describes the enormous impact of *Les Ballet Russes* at the beginning of the twentieth century:

Sergei Diaghliev's (1872-1929) *Les Ballet Russes*, was one of the finest collaborative projects in the earth 20<sup>th</sup> century, exerted a profound influence on dance, music and visual arts, Its compelling style was epitomised by a new emphasis on the sensuous presentation of the body...the energy vibrancy displayed by *Les Ballet Russes* precipitated artists to liberate their art practice...Bloomsbury was very much involved with Diaghliev's *Ballet*, finding it an inspirational source of imagery and genuine gaiety close to the outbreak of the war<sup>442</sup>

In *Still Life with a Photograph of Nijinsky* Grant clearly shows his intention to build the composition towards a central focus on the photograph, the vertical lines of the cabinet on which it stands, the pile of objects keeping it in place, the outer edge of the studio fireplace surround and the lid and handle of the pot all bringing the eye up to focus on the contrasting horizontal lines of the photograph. Like the original photograph, Nijinsky seems ready to spring from the painting with scarcely controlled energy in contrast to the inanimate objects around him. Other objects in the painting share a sense of physicality, the swelling outline of the thigh of the painted figure on the fire surround, the solidness of the cabinet and roundness of the pot. The photograph seems almost weightless in comparison. It leans back and slightly sideways though anchored in place it seems unstable and about to move at any moment. The figure of Nijinsky, reduced to lines and forms, shares these qualities. He has transformed and is all sinuous, moving forms and active circular and diagonal lines. Grant ties together the disparate elements of the photograph's image and shape and its surrounding objects by playfully mirroring the arch of Nijinsky's knee with the handles on the pot.

Through contrasts of line and form *Still Life with a Photograph of Nijinsky* clearly demonstrates Duncan Grant's interest in including photographs in his artistic process and his skill in suggesting relationships between the formal elements of the depicted

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<sup>442</sup> J. McKenzie, *Radical Bloomsbury: The Art of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell, 1905-1925* Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, 6<sup>th</sup> April-9<sup>th</sup> October 2011, *studio international*, <http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/radical-bloomsbury-the-art-of-duncan-grant-and-vanessa-bell--1905-1925> [accessed 10th December, 2011]

photograph and the physical objects surrounding it. This extended dialogue between the formal elements of the composition brings an added vitality and movement to the stasis intrinsic in the still life genre. At the same time, the traditional arrangement of objects into a still life composition anchors the photograph lending it a sense of monumentality and weightiness. Grant's inclusion of photographs in his still life paintings makes an important statement about the place of photography in his artistic process suggesting that photography far from being the poor sister of fine art could feature prominently, even dominantly within a painted composition.

The photograph of Vaslav Nijinsky in the painting speaks of another kind of journey. Through this photographic image Grant seems to say "I remember" or more simply "I was there." The photograph thus becomes a bridge between the past and present and a means by which to reflect on a lifetime of experience. Julia Hirsch defines this transient element of photographs suggesting that they are "segments in an on-going psychological pageant which includes active as well as passive participants: those who took the photographs, those who had it taken, and those who kept it and those who look at it."<sup>443</sup> The still life paintings that Grant produced are in many ways a dialogue with these previous participants whether through a photographic portrait like Druet's image of Nijinsky, a photograph of Vanessa Bell in 1902 by studio photographer George Beresford, or a photographic reproduction such as that of *Blue Nude I* by Matisse which Grant had purchased in Paris in 1970 while attending the Matisse Centenary Exhibition.<sup>444</sup> In paying homage to Nijinsky with this particular photograph Grant establishes a contrast between the content and genre of his painting. While the still life genre and photography are inherently static because they freeze a moment in time, here they exude a life and energy that recaptures the excitement of 1910-1911, the period of the photograph's creation and the arrival of *Les Ballet Russes* in London. They are alive because they also capture a psychic journey. Vanessa Bell recalling the time stated: "The autumn of 1910 is to me a time when everything seemed springing to a new life – a time when all was a sizzle of excitement, new relationships, new ideas, different and intense emotions all seemed crowding into one's life..."<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> J. Hirsch, *Family Photographs – Content, Meaning, Effect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 9.

<sup>444</sup> Shone, *Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Their Circle*, p. 251.

<sup>445</sup> V. Bell in Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 50.

Grant was to manifest the inspiration offered by Nijinsky and *Les Ballet Russes* in his paintings and designs for theatrical productions immediately following these first encounters. His inclusion of a photograph of Nijinsky at the height of his powers in 1910 in a painting produced at the end of his career suggests that the image still had a strong effect on him. It could take him back to a time when all was fresh and new and his artistic journey was just beginning. Grant was always interested in youth and beauty, both personally and professionally, and this photograph clearly represented for Grant the epitome of youthful energy at an age when he was living and painting a progressively still life.

## Conclusion

This chapter has traced the nature of photographic exchange and experimentation in private images related to Bell, Grant and their families. Private images have been defined as those with a limited circulation and have ranged from Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs of workers on the family estates in Ceylon to Vanessa Bell's record of her family and friends on holiday in the South of France. By their very nature, private images provide fertile ground for experimentation, an aspect which has been discussed here. Another little explored area that has been examined here was use of photographic ephemera like postcards and photographic reproductions to make exchanges with contemporaries and communicate artistic affinities.

Interior journeys have been traced by exploring images which initiated psychological journeys and communications with times and places past. These have ranged from death and remembrance and photographs of Julia Stephen's first husband's grave and Leslie Stephen's recollections of Julia Stephen summoned upon viewing photographs, to the picturing of ageless youth and vitality in Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs of Julia Stephen as a young girl. Bell and Grant's public expression of their own private and interior journeys on these themes resulted in painted meditations on family and life's course like Bell's *Flowers in A Jug* and Grant's *Still Life with Photograph of Nijinsky* and *Portrait of Mrs. Leslie Stephen*. All the photographs discussed in this section exemplify the duality of these photographs always existing between the public and private sphere, informing both physical and psychological exchange, and defining the winding road from past to present.

## Chapter Four: Monumental Studies and Snapshot Modernism

Bell's early travel photography exemplifies the new directions being taken by her generation. While the previous generation embraced increased mobility and accessibility to see the world, the photographic images of that increasingly accessible world remained relatively static. According to Frances Spalding Bell's interest in movement, particularly following the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1910, influenced the way she took photographs and similarly encouraged a photographic quality in her paintings:

Having previously confined herself to portraits and still-lives, she now painted the arbitrary configurations created by, for example, a street corner conversation or figures on a beach. In general portraits became more informal, less posed; subjects were seized upon with greater immediacy, images cropped liked snapshots, unexpected views taken.<sup>446</sup>

Like a number of photographers between the wars, both professional and amateur, Bell's photography was generally characterised by images free from the elements that had shaped the Pictorialist photographers of previous generations such as "soft focus, manipulation and retouching."<sup>447</sup> Nevertheless, there are sometimes aspects of Pictorialism in Bell's photographic work, particularly in her monumental images which borrow themes and compositional elements from Old Master paintings and the photographs of Julia Margaret Cameron. In adopting this approach Bell was not alone. Cecil Beaton (1904-1980) for example was praised for the documentary photographic images that made up his photographic travel book *Cecil Beaton's New York* published in 1938 and was similarly celebrated for his 1927 portrait of Edith Sitwell, which had much in common with Victorian tableaux.<sup>448</sup>

As well as appropriating previous themes and techniques, experimentation was rife in the practice of Modernist photographers in the 1920s. These techniques included "rayographs, multiple exposures, negative printing and solarisation."<sup>449</sup> While Beaton

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<sup>446</sup> Spalding, *British Art Since 1900*, p.41.

<sup>447</sup> D. Mellor, *Modern British Photography 1919-1939* (London: Arts Council England, 1978), p.5.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

chose to experiment with techniques developed in this period, Bell's photography remained in most cases resolutely 'straight' because she chose not to doctor her images after she had taken them. Yet Bell's photography offers a radically different approach to photography at this time. In a period that was seemingly dominated by picturing the individual in isolation or groups arranged and fully aware of the camera lens Bell's images reveal a concentrated interest in picturing conversational exchange and physical movement.

Bell's early travel photographs picture the world in this way. Her views of streets and markets, ports and squares depict a world that can barely be contained within the frame. Compared to the photographs of previous generations of her family on the move Bell does not want to contain anything. Camera in hand she now has the ability to create photographic images of life abroad that the generation before had to obtain from professional photographers who selected the view or type of portrait to be taken. Travel was deeply important to Bell to maintain her circle of friendships and as a source of artistic inspiration. There is no doubt that travelling inspired Bell and Grant's creativity as artists because they painted numerous studies of places they visited on both short-term holidays and longer stays abroad. Bell and Grant's daughter, Angelica Garnett, made clear her parent's sense of a connection with past artistic traditions while painting in Italy and France:

When we put up our easels, it was often in the vicinity of a Roman column or a building by Alberti, or in a landscape recalling Corot or Cézanne: we were infused by a feeling of continuity, a sort of spiritual kinship which, to my parents at least, was a source of pleasure and inspiration.<sup>450</sup>

The creative urge encouraged by the surrounding environment was always present for Bell and Grant. Angelica Garnett recalled her parent's daily life on visits to Paris:

And there was always the cafe, usually Les Deux Magots, where one could sip coffee, wait for friends, and consider what to do next. Hours were spent there, looking, watching, and often secretly sketching under the table, so as neither to offend nor provoke unwanted interest. Tiny sketchbooks were filled with rapid portraits in thick black pencil, of heads and bodies, expressing Vanessa's wonder at the variety yet sameness of humanity and the humour with which she regarded it.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.63.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p.89.

Arguably Bell saw her camera as another way to transmit her vision to a medium instantaneously. The technical experimentation in Bell's photography in this early period, the conversations between space, line and form, suggest conventions that would later appear in Bell's paintings and show how strongly photography informed her work. Movement is the key motif in Bell's photographs and a primary element in her engagement with modernism through photography.

This chapter explores elements of Bell and Grant's exchanges with past photographic conventions in their presentation of monumentality in the photographic image and examines this concept in relation to the work of Julia Margaret Cameron. The chapter then traces how Vanessa Bell began to develop what became her signature photographic style, the capturing of movement and conversation in the photographic frame, a technique which not only established Bell within the framework of English modernism in a new way but created the definitive photographic image of the Bloomsbury circle.

### **Monumentality in Julia Margaret Cameron's Photographs**

This section explores Julia Margaret Cameron's use of compositional and framing techniques inspired by Old Master paintings that she knew by way of reproductions to express a sense of monumentality in her photographic images. An analysis of this aspect of her work not only demonstrates her positive exchange with past painterly traditions by means of appropriation but it also provides a contextual backdrop for Bell and Grant's own appropriation of similar compositional and framing devices in the photographs they took or staged.

By the very nature of her influences, including artists and writers she associated with, most of Julia Margaret Cameron's photography falls squarely within the western painting tradition. George Frederic Watts, who often used photographs in the preparatory stage of paintings, corresponded with Cameron about her work and they shared models as well as compositional references to the Italian Old Masters.<sup>452</sup> That Watts referred often to photographic copies of paintings by Old Masters is supported by his acquisition of a subscription series of nearly one hundred photographic reproductions showing details of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescos by an

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<sup>452</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.175.

unidentified photographer.<sup>453</sup> In one of their frequent exchanges of letters Cameron asked Watts to appraise her work and Watts suggested she get “some photographs from prints after the Greatest Masters.”<sup>454</sup> Cameron also took framing cues from Old Masters’ works and often trimmed her photographs into oval and arched shapes similar to the ways in which the canvases of the paintings that inspired her were cut (Figure 183).<sup>455</sup> Cameron’s main access to important and influential artworks was through her friendship network of gallery owners, museum directors and high profile collectors.<sup>456</sup>

Another reference point for Cameron’s monumental images was likely her enjoyment of staging and taking part in home theatricals and *tableaux vivant* in which participants dressed up as figures or subjects from fiction or history.<sup>457</sup> Cameron’s monumental photographic studies were created to look like they, too, were from another time and were far removed from the aims of most Victorian photographers. However she acknowledged that her technique was much influenced by her contemporary David Wilkie Wynfield (1837-87), who was particularly noted for his 1864 publication of photographs entitled *The Studio: A Collection of Photographic Portraits of Living Artists, Taken in The Style of the Old Masters, by An Amateur*, a series of ten large-scale photographic portraits including G.F Watts, Frederic, Lord Leighton, and Edouard Manet.<sup>458</sup> In an undated letter Watts encouraged Cameron to “make an exchange with Winfield” in order to learn from his photographic technique.<sup>459</sup> In the same manner Cameron used her social circles at Holland House and Freshwater, Wynfield, too, photographed members of the St. John’s clique with whom he associated engaging in theatricals and fancy dress parties. In fact, Wynfield’s contemporaries often viewed his photographic work as “an extension of these leisure activities.”<sup>460</sup> This time travelling

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<sup>453</sup> Unknown Photographer, “Subscription Series of Large Photographic Reproductions of Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel Fresco Scene”, date unknown, The Rob Dickins Collections, Watts Gallery Archive, <http://www.wattsgallery.org.uk/library-archive/rob-dickins-collection>.

<sup>454</sup> G.F. Watts to J. M Cameron, 19 October 1872, NPG P125, National Portrait Gallery Collection.

<sup>455</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p. 57.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59.

<sup>457</sup> Ford, *Julia Margaret Cameron - 19<sup>th</sup> Century Photographer of Genius*, p. 70.

<sup>458</sup> C.S. Smith, ‘Foreword’, in *The Princes of Bohemia* by J. Hacking (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>459</sup> G.F. Watts to J.M. Cameron, undated, NPG P125 (3a/3b/3c/3d), National Portrait Gallery, London.

<sup>460</sup> J. Hacking, ‘Hand and Soul: the Photography of David Wilkie Wynfield’, in *The Princes of Bohemia*, (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2000), pp.10-11.

ethos is present in Cameron's portrait of Henry Taylor often titled *A Rembrandt* or *A Study After Rembrandt*, Wynfield's 1865 self-portrait produced for inclusion in his "Studio" portrait series, and Cameron's portrait of Tennyson. As such, all of these images can be understood as a form of travel photography (Figures 184-185).

Cameron also inscribed her photographs "after the manner of" to alert viewers to her influences. Critics often framed this reference in terms of an affinity between artists as a review from *The Times* dating from 1873 makes clear:

If Giotto leaving his lilies and burning skies, Raphael with his locks flowing beneath his little velvet cap; Valasquez in chivalrous dignity, shoe ribands and curled moustachios; Sir Antony in his lace collar, and Sir Joshua in his shoe buckles were suddenly finding themselves walking up Conduit Street and turning at the door of Mrs. Cameron's Gallery, one can imagine them less strangers, than might have been expected, looking around quietly, not feeling much displaced nor very far from home.<sup>461</sup>

Monumentality is particularly evident in Cameron's *Great Men* series of portraits of which her 1866 portrait of Alfred Lord Tennyson is an example (Figure 147). Though these images owed as much to the influence of the Old Masters as her other works they were in opposition to the popular contemporary mode of circulating celebrity images via carte de visite and cabinet images.<sup>462</sup> The starkness of these portraits, with their concentration on the head and face emphasised by the covering of the sitter in black cloth and placement against a black background, presented a direct contrast to the carte de visite and cabinet images that often pictured sitters in their best clothes against an elaborate studio backdrop. Cameron's numerous Madonna and Child studies are also striking in their individuality and their dissimilarity from other popular genre series in nineteenth century photography and painting.<sup>463</sup>

Monumentality was also evoked in descriptions of Cameron and her sisters by others. Lady Henry Somerset noted that the Pattle sisters had:

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<sup>461</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p. 71.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>463</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p. 19.



...a love of beauty in colour and form they all seemed to have expressed in a passion for dress. They scorned Fashion, wore neither crinoline nor stays, and in long flowing garments designed and made by themselves, they walked serenely like goddesses through the London street.<sup>464</sup>

Cameron's female sitters were often clothed in a similar fashion. Photographs of Cameron herself swathed in richly coloured Indian shawls communicate something of the air of difference which Cameron and her sisters must have cultivated in Victorian society (Figure 186).

In Julia Margaret Cameron's work, group compositions involving two or more figures are a recurrent theme. Here Cameron's photographs present the relationships between women and children in a way that is at once more fluid than contemporary Victorian studio portraiture but at the same time expressive of the monumentality of the Old Master paintings that inspired and influenced her staging and placement of sitters. The following section identifies how these images can be understood as a form of travel photography.

Photographic images of multiple generations have a powerful effect. By presenting visual difference they close chronological gaps by showing in the exchange between old and young an affinity and continuity between them. Amanda Hopkinson suggests that Cameron's photographs often demonstrate "the inter-relationship between an elderly, venerable and often powerful 'potentate'...juxtaposed with a young maiden, often with an attitude of appeal."<sup>465</sup> This element is particularly evident in photographs like *King Lear allotting his kingdom to His Three Daughters* (1872) and *The Grandmother* (1865) which present a clear juxtaposition between the innocence of youth and the experience of old age (Figures 187-188).

The mother and child relationship in Julia Margaret Cameron's numerous studies of the Madonna and Child demonstrates clearly Cameron's interest in the maternal, physical and psychological connection between mother and child and the power and influence of the mother figure within the family dynamic over successive generations. These images suggest a bridging of physical and emotional gaps and an awareness of life's journeys already completed and those to come. Victoria Olsen suggests that Cameron's

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<sup>464</sup> K. Fitzpatrick, *Lady Henry Somerset* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1923), pp. 14-15.

<sup>465</sup> A. Hopkinson, in Hinton, *Immortal Faces: Julia Margaret Cameron on the Isle of Wight*, p. 90.

depictions of mothers and children are primarily concerned with “the pain of an evitable separation to come” and betray something of Cameron’s own feelings as a mother often separated from her children and family by great distances, particularly following the Cameron’s move back to Ceylon in 1875.<sup>466</sup> Two images that particularly address the concept of physical distance, separation and the longed for return of a loved one are *The Mariner’s Wife* (1864-1865) and *Mrs. Rachel Gurney* (1872/4) (Figures 189-190). In both images the maternal figure is depicted in meditation, neither meeting the camera’s gaze nor that of her child. The children are depicted in necessary contact clinging to the mother who sits or stands as the sole protector of the family unit.

Perhaps the most poignant image of this kind (one of a series) is that of Cameron’s niece Julia Duckworth with children in her own and her extended family in mourning following the death of her young husband (Figure 191). While all of these images are imbued with a sense of impending or recent tragedy they present at the same time a strong feminine identity that is not reliant on masculine approval or protection. This sense of being outside male authority lifts these images to being examples of feminine strength that seems to reinforce, as Victoria Olsen suggests, “the powerful matriarchy of the Pattle sisters.”<sup>467</sup> It is not surprising that the following generation of women in Cameron’s family, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf, preferred the image of their mother captured by their great-aunt’s camera to that of their father’s written memorial in the *Mausoleum Book*.

### **The Artist as Monumental – Picturing Artists at Home Through Photographic Images**

Picturing artists in their home or studio is a long-standing convention and from the 1870s photography, in the form of carte de visite and cabinet images, became the preferred medium to show artists in their home environment. This is perhaps best exemplified by the commercially popular text *Artists at Home* (1884) which combined biographical sketches of twenty two artists by Frederic George Stephens, including G.F. Watts, John Everett Millais and Lawrence Alma Tadema by Frederic George Stephens with photographs by J.P. Mayall. The book shows contemporary artists posed as if

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<sup>466</sup> Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p. 22.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

sitting for standard portraits against the often opulent backdrop of their studios which are filled with their paintings reproductions and sculpture. That the monograph was originally published for subscribers in six instalments including four photo engravings in each instalment speaks to the somewhat rarefied nature of the publication, both in terms of the expense of its production and its depictions of celebrity artists of the day in their private spaces.<sup>468</sup> Contemporary reviewers were quick to suggest that the images did not serve to enlighten the viewer regarding the artists' character, working methods or the way they inhabited their studio spaces but rather presented tableaux of wealth, comfortable living and dramatic scene-making invariably directed by the artists themselves rather than the photographer.<sup>469</sup>

Similar characteristics were found in the carte de visite and cabinet photographs of the period from portraits produced for private display to mass produced images of celebrities and popular tourist destinations. Indeed the status of artist in Victorian popular culture extends this connection as artists' homes, particularly in London, became places to see and be seen.<sup>470</sup> The cult of celebrity was such that even Tennyson living at Farringford on the Isle of Wight lamented the incursion of people peering through his windows and hanging around his gates.

Duncan Grant became familiar with a more intimate ritual known as 'Picture Sunday' when artists opened their studios to friends and acquaintances, often to preview works destined for the Royal Academy, while living with his aunt and uncle, Sir Richard and Lady Strachey and their family between 1902 and 1905.<sup>471</sup> Vanessa Bell also had intimate connections with prominent artists of the period through her maternal links with the Little Holland House set that was orchestrated by her great-aunt Sara Princep. As a result the teenaged Bell was invited to parties attended by artists like Sir Edward Burne-Jones and President of the Royal Academy Sir Edward Poynter who were both photographed for *Artists at Home*<sup>472</sup> That she pronounced such stiff social occasions

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<sup>468</sup> J. Milk, 'Artists at Home: Artifice and Presence' in *Record or Representation? Photography and the Artist's Studio, Collecting and the Courtauld's Collections: The Courtauld Research Forum (2008-2009)*, <http://courtauld.ac.uk/researchforum/projects/collecting-collections/documents/ArtistsatHome.pdf> [accessed 8, May 2011]. See also Codell on artist biography

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Gere, *Artistic Circles: Design and Decoration In the Aesthetic Movement*, p.20.

<sup>471</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.27.

<sup>472</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 21.

“very dull” stemmed in part from what she considered the outmoded style of many of these prominent artists who were popular at the time.<sup>473</sup>

Bell’s exposure to the work and techniques of leading artists increased following her entrance to the Royal Academy’s Painting School in 1899 where notable among her tutors were Val Prinsep, Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Marcus Stone who were all pictured in *Artists at Home* (Figures 192-193). Duncan Grant visited Alma-Tadema’s studio in 1907 on the invitation of his daughter Laura. The exoticism of the artist’s home, at that time full of fountains, tropical gardens and rich decoration, is somewhat at odds with the plainness of his studio depicted in Mayall’s photograph though the Indian rugs do offer a hint of lavishness.<sup>474</sup> All of these photographs depict the artist in a way that echoes images of the artist at work dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century presenting them as cultured, respectable and highly successful members of Victorian society. An image included in *Artists at Home* which characterises this idea is Mayall’s photographic portrait of George Frederic Watts who is shown almost engulfed by large-scale canvases, both his own by other artists, affirming his affiliation with past and present masters (Figure 194).

A later publication *Members and Associates of the Royal Academy of Arts, 1891, photographed in their studios*, published privately by Henry Peach Robinson’s son Ralph Winwood Robinson, showed no radical departure in its depiction of the artist at work even though the art world in that year was beginning to feel the impact of the burgeoning French Post-Impressionist movement (Figures 195-196).<sup>475</sup> The photographs in Robinson’s publication clearly demonstrate the Academy’s continuing conservative interest in electing more traditional painters to its ranks. That Robinson did not obtain more experimental images for his publication is surprising given his father had, in 1883, formed a group called The Linked Ring whose members sought through pictorial effect to push the painterly qualities of the photograph. They later became a key influence on modernist photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including Alfred Steiglitz

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<sup>473</sup> V. Bell (then Stephen) to T. Stephen, 16 March 1897, Kings College Cambridge, reproduced in Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 21.

<sup>474</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.72.

<sup>475</sup> M. Bills and D. Webb, *Victorian Artists in Photographs: Selections from the Rob Dickins Collection*, (Guilford: Watts Gallery, 2007), p.18.

who according to Bob Cotton was the first to “discover Cameron as a proto-modernist.”<sup>476</sup>

Robinson was in fact critical of Cameron’s technique. In return she had expressed her dissatisfaction in her memoir *Annals of My Glass House* that Robinson had won the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of the Photographic Society noting that “The picture that did receive the prize, called *Brenda*, clearly proved to me that detail of table-cover, chair and crinoline skirt were essential to the judges of the art,” Cameron’s sarcasm is little disguised.<sup>477</sup>

A singular exception to the formal presentation of the artist as a monumental figure in Mayall’s and Robinson’s series of photographs is Mayall’s portrait of the genre painter Thomas Webster sitting in the door way of his home (Figure 197). That Webster’s gentle scenes of country life were at odds with the other artists in Mayall’s series who were well-known for depicting sweeping dramatic works is perhaps the reason why he is photographed looking slightly more casual but still maintaining an element of dash in his velvet coat. He looks out into the garden at nature rather than in serious meditation over his canvases.

Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographs of Watts are in stark contrast to Mayall’s and Winwood Robinson’s images. Here the focus is on the character, vision and moments of creativity behind the successful painter rather than on the public persona. The moments are personal and deeply felt rather than extrovert. *Whisper of the Muse* (1865) depicts Watts as a musician exemplifying creativity more generally than specifically as a painter (Figure 198). Another 1864 portrait of Watts by Cameron is devoid of any reference to artistic endeavours but is a tightly focused close-up on the sitter’s face and the folds of fabric on his cloak (Figure 199).

A photograph of Vanessa Bell (then Vanessa Stephen) painting Lady Robert Cecil in 1905, though related to earlier ‘artist at work’ photographs like those taken by Mayall and Robinson, depicts a much simpler domestic interior (Figure 200). The chosen room for the sitting was a private space rather than one which was decorated for display as many prominent Victorian studios were used for this dual purpose. The photograph was

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<sup>476</sup> Cotton, *Julia Margaret Cameron and the Allure of Photography*, p. 56.

<sup>477</sup> Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House: Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, p.13.

taken in the drawing room at 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, where Bell had moved with her siblings Virginia, Toby and Adrian following the death of their father. Nicola Moorby writes of the photograph in “Her Indoors: Women Artists and Depictions of the Domestic Interior”: “...the house was home and workplace, subject and the studio...”<sup>478</sup> In the photograph Bell adopts the ‘artist at work’ stance, palette in hand in front her easel. While recalling *The Artist at Home* images Bell betrays a certain hesitancy of expression rather than self-assurance at her task. In fact the photograph suggests Bell’s unease at undertaking her first commission, the resultant portrait deemed both ‘tentative, and in places awkward.’<sup>479</sup> Bell later went to Chelwood Gate, the Cecil’s Sussex home, to complete the commission. Of the experience of engaging in conversation and civilities with the Cecils and their visitors she concluded despairingly “that staying away is a very severe test of one’s general intelligence and it’s appalling to find how little I’ve got.”<sup>480</sup>

Another letter written from Chelwood indicates that Bell felt a certain freedom in being out from under the wings of the Slade, telling her sister Virginia that she was “in a tolerable state of conceit, having as usual thrown all rules to the wind and abandoned all method and order.”<sup>481</sup> Certainly by this stage Bell was consciously reacting against the old guard of artists who were recorded in J.P. Mayall’s publication *Artists at Home*. Writing at length to her friend Margery Snowden about a visit to G.F. Watts’ studio at his summer residence Limnerslease in 1903 she recounted:

After breakfast I went into the studio. Mr. Watts is painting a huge tree trunk covered in ivy. “That’s going to be sent to the Academy as a protest against Impressionism. You see every leaf is cleanly painted. There’s no smearing, and cleanness is a great quality...”<sup>482</sup>

Bell greatly admired John Singer Sargent who had been one of her tutors at the Royal Academy Schools following her acceptance there in 1901. Her inclusion of Watt’s

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<sup>478</sup> N. Moorby, ‘Her Indoors: Women Artists and Depictions of the Domestic Interior’, in *The Camden Town Group in Context* ed by H. Bonett, Y. Holt and J. Mundy, May 2012, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/nicola-moorby-her-indoors-women-artists-and-depictions-of-the-domestic-interior-r1104359> [accessed 09 July 2014].

<sup>479</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p .55.

<sup>480</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 15 April 1906, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 38.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> V. Bell to M. Snowden, 15 March 1903, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.8.

negative critique demonstrates her opposition to what she viewed as the old guard.<sup>483</sup> Another photograph of Bell in the act of painting that shows affinity with Mayall's motif of picturing the artist dwarfed by their own large-scale works is that of Bell painting murals for Berwick Church (Figure 201). This photograph taken between 1940 and 1942 is not a celebrity picture but one showing the artist in her workplace.

A series of scans of photographs belonging Paul Roche Duncan Grant's companion in the later years of his life, offers a meditation on Grant as a personality and as an artist. Images which show Grant as 'artist' in the mode of *Artists at Home* portray him in studied concentration at his craft or facing the camera frontally with a great deal of gravitas. One gets the impression that he has been asked to adopt the pose in emulation of those Victorian artist celebrities who had gone before though Grant's sense of enthusiasm and energy remains evident (Figures 202-203).<sup>484</sup>

Another photograph recalls Cameron's *Whisper of the Muse* suggesting abstractly Grant's artistic endeavours (Figure 204). This image does not physically contain Grant but its inclusion of Grant's easel, marked with his name and holding his often worn straw hat, points to his presence in the image. Poignancy is also an essential element of these 'aging artist' photographs of Grant. A striking and deliberately posed photograph of Grant, Angelica Garnett, Paul Roche and Richard Shone communicates a number of clearly intentional messages (Figure 205). Differences in age and youth are evident but reference is also made to artistic youth, both by pairing Grant's painted screen from the Omega Workshops dating from 1913 and the 1905 studio portrait of Vanessa Bell in artists cap by George Beresford.

Other images also speak to the theme of the 'aging artist' and seem intent on documenting Grant in his infirmity, sitting in his wheelchair at Charleston enjoying the small pleasures left to him in life, from the tea table set outside to the more visceral, naked male form of his companion (Figures 206-207). In contrast many of the photographs of Grant from this period show more keenly his life-long interest in other people and conversation, of engaging with those around him. He faces the world and the camera with a twinkle in his eye. This is particularly so in Simon Watney's 1969

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> The scanned photographs are in the Charleston Collections, the originals remain with the Roche family.

snapshot (Figure 208). These photographs demonstrate a complete rejection of the photographic *Artist at Home* conventions illustrated in the series by Mayall and Robinson, with the exception the Thomas Webster portrait, in capturing the happy even mischievous interaction between the sitter and the camera.

Angelica Garnett highlighted this aspect of Grant's personality in her second memoir of life in the Bloomsbury circle entitled *The Eternal Moment*:

Appropriately enough it was the young who first re-evaluated his work, by then unpopular and forgotten. Once they realised that far from being in his grave he was still alive and active, they responded to his unforced and natural sympathy, his spontaneity and gentle sense of humour with delighted surprise: was it possible for an old gentleman in his eighties to be so youthful and at the same time so full of wisdom?<sup>485</sup>

### **Monumentality in Public and Private Bloomsbury Photographs**

An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved – for a few moments or a few centuries.<sup>486</sup>

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant often referenced photographs in their work, as Bell's *Still life with Flowers in a Jug* and Grant's *Still-life with Photograph of Nijinsky* demonstrate. Yet Bell also identified an obscuring aspect of photography that did not show things precisely as they were. Writing to Grant about visiting Picasso's Paris studio in 1914 she emphasised this fact stating:

All the bits of wood and frames had become like his pictures. Some of the newest are very lovely I thought. One hardly gets any idea from the photographs, which often don't show what is picture and what it isn't.<sup>487</sup>

This contrasts with her earlier exclamations to former Slade student and friend Margery Snowden in which she wrote that she would bring back photographic reproductions of the paintings and architecture she had seen in Italy. She derived immense pleasure and inspiration from her great-aunt Julia Margaret Cameron's photography which she hung in her home and frequently consulted. Bell also included a photograph of Cameron by her son Henry Herschel Hay Cameron in one of her photograph albums. A sense of the

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<sup>485</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.128.

<sup>486</sup> Berger, *The Art of Seeing*, p. 9.

<sup>487</sup> V. Bell to D. Grant, 15 March 1914, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.161.



monumental, with references to works by Old Masters so central to Cameron's image-making was also consciously an integral part of Bell's private photography.

Some of Bloomsbury's attitudes towards Cameron's success as an image-maker were not always so clear cut as Roger Fry's essay for a collection of Cameron's images demonstrates. Published in 1926 in collaboration with Virginia Woolf who wrote an introduction, *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men & Fair Women* was the first serious critique of Cameron's work since her death in 1879. Fry's essay and Woolf's introduction offer an additional perspective on the ways in which the Bloomsbury circle appropriated and opposed and therefore engaged with Cameron's photography. In his essay Fry acknowledges that the 1860s and 1870s when Cameron was active was a period in which "England was enjoying a spell of strong individualism...People were indeed excessively careful to conform to a certain code of morals but within the limits they were not afraid of their own personalities."<sup>488</sup> He also notes the strength with which Cameron's photographs transmit and resonate with the power of the Old Masters stating that "...photography, at least in Mrs. Cameron's hands, can give us something that only the greatest masters were capable of giving."<sup>489</sup> In his view she was "pre-eminently an artist."<sup>490</sup> On the other hand Fry could also temper his admiration for Cameron's accomplishments by suggesting that hers was a "strange world" where Cameron and her circle were "so unconscious of the abyss of ridicule they skirt, so determined, so conscientious, so bravely provincial."<sup>491</sup> Within these terms Fry defines her greatest successes as those portraits of 'Great Men' for which she was widely recognised at the time of their first circulation while suggesting that her allegorical works were typically Victorian in their overt sentimentality. The allegorical images demonstrating the influence of Watts are relegated by Fry to "elaborately arranged and carefully thought-out group compositions, but mediocre [and]...failures from an aesthetic standpoint."<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> R. Fry and V. Woolf, *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women by Julia Margaret Cameron* (London: Hogarth Press, 1926), p.23.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., p.25.

Alternatively I propose that it is possible that Bell, and by extension Grant, were influenced by Cameron's monumental works even at the height of the abstract period of their careers. To underline this positive exchange, that is Bell and Grant's appropriation of Cameron's technique and their interest in picturing monumentality within a modernist framework, I have paired a painting by Vanessa Bell which has not previously been linked to two photographs by Cameron to demonstrate the possibility of a connection between works by Bell and Cameron that has not previously been identified.

In 1910-11 Vanessa Bell worked on two versions of a nativity scene and this section discusses the first entitled *Nativity: Women and Baby* (Figure 209).<sup>493</sup> Chris Reed noted that Vanessa Bell based the figures in the work on a drawing which Roger Fry had done of Bell and her children.<sup>494</sup> I believe that Bell may have also drawn on Cameron's photographs to complete this painting based on shared compositional elements between Bell's painting and Cameron's photographs (Figures 210-211).<sup>495</sup>

There is some evidence that Vanessa Bell saw visual connections between her own experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing as a woman and artist and photographs by her great-aunt which meditated on these themes. A letter written by Bell to her sister Virginia in 1908 from the confines of the stuffy and traditional country home of the Bell family suggests the tantalising idea of refusing to go there while pregnant and instead going through the Cameron photographs with her sister as they used to: "...[We will] see [each other] every day and gaze at the most beautiful of Aunt Julia's photographs incessantly."<sup>496</sup> It is likely that Vanessa would have been familiar with Cameron's *My Grandchild Archie, aged 2 years 3 months* (1865) and *The Sacred and Lovely Remains of My Little Adopted Child Adeline Grace Clogstoun*, (1875) because they were private family images. A print of the former was gifted to the Victoria and Albert Museum (then the South Kensington Museum) in 1865. The latter

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<sup>493</sup> These painting are not known to still be in existence, illustration from *Vogue*, late February, 1926, reproduced in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.34.

<sup>494</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, p.32.

<sup>495</sup> This idea is not documented in letters in which Bell discusses the development of the two Nativity works in correspondence to Roger Fry (10 October, 1911, 17 October 1912, 24 October, 1913), Tate Gallery Archives.

<sup>496</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 1912 in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 67.

image was one of four photographs she took of her eldest sister's granddaughter who had died of an unspecified injury while playing with her siblings.<sup>497</sup> These images are anomalies, the only post mortem portraits she produced and the only photographs she inscribed "From Death," rather than her usual by line "From Life."

Post-mortem photography flourished in the nineteenth century following the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839. These photographs served as keepsakes to remember the deceased and often showed infants and young children. Given high infant mortality rates and the high cost of photographic portraits these were frequently the only image of the child the family ever had. The later invention of the carte de visite permitting multiple prints to be made from a single negative allowed copies to be made. If the relatives were too far away to attend the funeral the image became both a *memento mori* and a type of travel photograph.

Between Bell's canvas and Cameron's photographs there are some striking similarities. In Bell's composition the arrangement of the figures is ambiguous; it could either be picturing a scene of mourning or a celebration of the post birth experience. The interchangeable titles of Bell's two paintings on the same theme, *Nativity/Women and Baby* serves to reinforce this ambiguity. The use of the *Nativity* title invokes the future death of the Christ child while *Women and Baby* speaks to a different kind of universal theme. Similarly Cameron's photograph of *My Grandson Archie* is one of a series of three images, all slightly varied from the other, the others entitled *The Shadow of the Cross* and *Devotion*. Again the titles fluctuate between personal and Christian history. The duality of life and death, of celebration and mourning is clearly apparent and achieved by Cameron's careful manipulation of the photograph, superimposing one image over the top of the other.

All three images share a common interest in the creation of blocks of colour or in Cameron's case contrast between light and dark. This is communicated particularly strongly in Cameron's post-mortem image in which the starkness of the white sheets on the bed stands in contrast to the darkly papered wall behind. Though we no longer know Bell's colour scheme for *Nativity, Women and Baby* because the painting has been lost

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<sup>497</sup> Orphaned in 1870, Adeline and her sibling Mary lived between the Cameron and Princep households, while Blanche was adopted by G.F Watts, see Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, p.188.

and only a *Vogue* magazine illustration remains, her interest in showing colour contrast between the dark dresses of the women standing and seated around the bed and the bedclothes covering the woman on the bed (this too suggests a connection with Cameron's photograph) is clear. Figuratively there are also parallels between the angling of the seated woman's face in Bell's composition and the model in Cameron's image, the often photographed maid Mary Hillier. There are further similarities in the positioning of the mother figure in Bell's painting and the sleeping child in Cameron's photograph in the angle of the head and turn of the hip in repose and the pointing of a single finger downwards.

Though it is not possible to trace definitive links between Bell's *Nativity*, *Women and Baby* and Cameron's two photographs, *My Grandson Archie, aged two years and three months* and *The Sacred and Lovely Remains of My Little Adopted Child Adeline Grace Clogstoun*, I think it highly likely that she was influenced by these images. Certainly at the time she would have had life, death and childbirth at the forefront of her mind having experienced a miscarriage in April 1911 while visiting Turkey with Roger Fry and H.T.J Norton and suspecting mistakenly in October of that year that she might be pregnant again.<sup>498</sup> I have shown how all three of these images make overt and covert references to the monumental aspect of life and death, the monolithic watching figures of Bell's *Nativity* and *Women and Child* suggesting the sense of continuity and exchange which exists within this cycle.

In his essay for *Famous Men and Fair Women*, Roger Fry marked a clear distinction between movement in Cameron's monumental photographic technique and other photographers of the period. He praised "those slight movements of the sitter [that give] certain breadth and envelopment to the form" and the capturing of "generalized expression and form" apparent in Cameron's images compared to "the too instantaneous" and "too positive quality" of expressions found in modern photography.<sup>499</sup> From this perspective both Cameron's and Bell's photographic work

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<sup>498</sup> Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, pp. 97,107. Roger Fry had nursed Bell immediately following her miscarriage and arranged transport home. By October 1911 she had begun a relationship with Fry but was still involved with her husband, Clive Bell.

<sup>499</sup> Fry and Woolf, *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women by Julia Margaret Cameron*, p. 26.

demonstrates a successful combination of monumentality and movement, past traditions and modernism.

A number of images in Vanessa Bell's personal photograph albums show a clear interest in picturing the monumentality present in Old Masters paintings and the photography of Julia Margaret Cameron. This is particularly the case where children and relationships between adults and children are portrayed. An image dating from 1912, photographer unknown, of Vanessa and Clive Bell and their young son Quentin brings to mind Cameron's photographs of women and children based on the motif of the Virgin and Child (Figure 212). In discussing this photograph, Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett point to these precedents when commenting on the identity of the photographer: "The pose suggests someone who knew and was in sympathy with the great Italians – Roger Fry very likely although it could have been Duncan Grant."<sup>500</sup> The appearance of Clive Bell's head in the lower left hand corner seems incidental at first, but, in light of the above comment, might suggest the attendants staring knowingly from the foreground in many Old Master paintings. Alternatively it might suggest a departure from the art historical and photographic precedents that inspired Vanessa Bell in its favour of the fleeting and incidental. This unique and thoroughly modernist approach to the photographic image can also be found in Bell's photographic studies that capture movement and these will be discussed later in this chapter.

Bell's 1917-1918 close-up shot head and shoulder portraits of her son Julian against the garden wall include a prop similar to those used by Cameron in her photographs to denote a religious theme, though here used with humorous intent to provide Julian with an angelic halo (Figure 213). Another image of Vanessa Bell and her eldest son Julian, also dated 1912, references the Virgin and Child even more directly and incorporates one of Bell's favourite photographic techniques by placing the figures within a window frame (Figure 214). The same window and framing technique appears in a photograph of Maynard Keynes and Bell in the pose of the Adoration of the Virgin (Figure 215). Bell appears in a classic Virgin pose and Keynes as a suppliant before the imaginary altarpiece. Monumentality is expressed literally in a portrait of Duncan Grant from 1912 perched on a high wall like a statue on a plinth (Figure 216). Bell repeated this device two years later in a portrait of Roger Fry sitting in a chair which is again balanced on a

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<sup>500</sup> Bell and Garnett, *Vanessa Bell's Family Album* p. 32

wall. Older Grecian references are invoked in a photograph of Angelica Garnett (née Bell) at the Parthenon; the pose is very much in keeping with Julia Margaret Cameron's technique and again incorporates Bell's window framing motif (Figure 217).

Analyzing these photographs Val Williams suggests that while they appear in the guise of amateur photography they in fact incorporate "sophisticated and complicated methods of portraiture...[using] the medium to present profound, and perhaps unacknowledged truths."<sup>501</sup> Notably this was Cameron's aim. She wrote in 1864 that with her camera she sought to "ennoble Photography and to secure for it the character and uses of High Art by combining the real and the Ideal and sacrificing nothing of the Truth by all possible devotion to poetry and beauty."<sup>502</sup>

In this light it is possible to see reminiscences of Julia Margaret Cameron's portraits of Bell's mother, Julia Stephen, in mourning for her first husband in photographs of Vanessa Bell from 1934, the year of Roger Fry's death (Figures 218-219). Both of these portraits suggest the monumental and memorializing aspect of the act of mourning.

The influence of the Old Masters was also undeniably present in Duncan Grant's work and it is interesting that Angelica Garnett commented on his relationship with these painters in terms of a process of exchange: "he was a cultivated artist who had learned a lot from study of the old masters, with whom he kept a constant dialogue."<sup>503</sup> Further Garnett characterises Grant's "dialogue" with his artistic predecessors in terms of a journey:

...his innate loyalty led him to defend, not only Delacroix and Burne-Jones, frowned on by Vanessa, but academic artists of the nineteenth century laughed at unconsciously - and perhaps unfairly - by the rest of us. Art sometimes seemed like a hilly landscape with some mountains from which you could get a marvellous view, and others it was hardly worth the trouble of climbing. But for Duncan it was mostly a delight, a country in which he spent most of his life.<sup>504</sup>

Previous chapters have shown how paintings and photographs can be expressions of the sitter and the artist or photographer. External technique can reveal inner truth. In view

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<sup>501</sup> V. Williams, *Women Photographers: The Other Observers, 1900 to Present* (London: Virago Press, 1986), p.80.

<sup>502</sup> Julia Margaret Cameron, in Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.41.

<sup>503</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.42

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., p.43.

of this the monumental aspects of Vanessa Bell's private photography take on an added dimension. Descriptions of Bell repeatedly contain references to the mythological and monumental.

The following series of quotations supports the assertion that Bell's photographic work was in large part shaped by this side of her character. Her daughter, Angelica, frequently invoked the classical and mythological in her recollections of her mother:

Vanessa had a kind of stoical warmth about her, a monolithic quality that reminded one now of the implacable smile of primitive Aphrodite, now of the hollow wind-whistling statues of Erewhon.<sup>505</sup>

Behind her easel – Separated from but aware of the habitual noises and rhythms of life in the background, she never lost touch with the Ariadne – like thread which connected her careful hand and large grey eye to the subject.<sup>506</sup>

She was often jealous, perpetually alarmed that he would leave her but, having outgrown the aura of Demeter, she donned the cloak of Piero's Virgin and spreading it out warmed us all beneath it.<sup>507</sup>

Frances Partridge, a central figure of the Bloomsbury circle, noted that this element of Bell's character and deportment enlarged with age stating that "As she got old and moved more slowly, it was as if one of the statues from the Acropolis had stepped down from her pedestal and was taking a stately walk."<sup>508</sup> She also recalled how "Vanessa's awesomely noble resemblance to a Greek statue of the archaic period contrasted with her dry sense of humour."<sup>509</sup> Similarly Lady Ottoline Morrell noted Bell's "Madonna-like beauty."<sup>510</sup> Garnett also points to Bell's frequent need for a calm, solitary environment in order to create, both at home and when she and Grant were travelling abroad where they were often a source of spectacle for local people when setting up their easels out of doors:

In Italy in particular both painters inevitably drew small crowds to watch their performance...Vanessa would avoid such a situation whenever possible, even at the

<sup>505</sup> A. Garnett in *Recollections of Virginia Woolf by Her Contemporaries*, ed by J.R. Noble (London: Penguin Books, 1975), pp.173, 52.

<sup>506</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.61.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>508</sup> F. Partridge, *Memories* (London: Phoenix, 1981), p.80.

<sup>509</sup> F. Partridge, *Charleston Past and Present*, Charleston Open Day, V and A, 1985, p. 142

<sup>510</sup> Ottoline Morrell, in Rosenbaum (ed.) *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism*, p.245.

sacrifice of a more exciting view of her subject: she would choose a shadowy corner of bridge or some ledge too small to accommodate anyone but herself.<sup>511</sup>

Yet one gets the sense from Bell's letters that in her youth she took on these crowds with gusto filled with a desire to sketch and paint the world around her, as she might have also seized her camera and taken herself unaccompanied into the landscape of downs and bustling metropolises documented her early travel photograph. In 1946 she wrote to Angelica from Dieppe:

Yesterday, Monday, was lovely in the morning and we all went sketching - rather an alarming procedure always in a town, but Dieppe is really so lovely that one gets over one's nerves. I encouraged myself by remembering how I used to face the Roman crowds and used to walk miles carrying my apparatus through the Borghese gardens...<sup>512</sup>

A similar monumentality appears in Bell's photographic studies for Berwick Church and other images where a sense of the Old Masters, particularly the Italian Primitives, is sought after and achieved (Figures 220). Here the frozen tableaux-like images and classical poses show Cameronesque-like restraint. Comparisons between these photographic images and her and Grant's paintings suggest that they were not only preparatory studies but also indicators of connections between old and new forms of image making within the project and that monumentality had a place in visually representing the modern world.<sup>513</sup> The second photograph of Vanessa Bell and Chattie Salaman reinforces this concept with its clear juxtaposition of an Old Masters-like arrangement of figures at the point of the photographic image's creation with Bell's own copy of an Old Masters portrait (Willem Drost, Figure 110), which hangs subtly on the wall (Figure 221). The third image of Chattie Salaman brings to mind Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs based on the Elgin marbles and portraits of Ellen Terry and Stella Duckworth (Figures 222 and 223).

For Bell monumentality was not simply about capturing sitters in the guise of archaic sculpture and in poses similar to Old Master works or about painting the interiors of public buildings it was also about finding significance in the private sphere of the domestic environment. This can be seen in a series of photographs taken in 1936 by

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<sup>511</sup> Garnett, *The Eternal Moment: Essays and A Short Story*, p.65.

<sup>512</sup> V. Bell to A. Bell, 17 September 1946, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 508.

<sup>513</sup> Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, p. 71



Barbara Bagenal in several rooms at Charleston (Figure 224). These photographs offer an interesting form of monument-making, of recording the present to be looked back upon in the future. It appears that these photographs may have been used by Bell as a record and indeed enticement to her son Julian who had relocated to Hankow, China, to take up a lecturing position at the university there. Her remark in a letter, “Didn’t I tell you that Barbara Bagenal took the interiors of this house, with some wonderful German camera. She spent a week here alone in the summer,” seems to imply that Bell posted off prints of the images to her son.<sup>514</sup>

Similarly Bell’s photographic studies of her daughter Angelica in Persian costume can be characterized as travel images because they both picture a fictional figure of another place and time, the Russian princess in Virginia Woolf’s novel *Orlando* (Figure 225). The images were circulated privately among the Bloomsbury Group and publically through their publication in Woolf’s work. A letter from Bell to her sister indicates the photographs were likely taken some months before the novel’s publication in 1928 since she wrote to Woolf from France: “I wonder very much what’s happening to Angelica, also what you finally did with the photographs?”<sup>515</sup>

### **Movement in the Photographs of Julia Margaret Cameron**

Movement in many forms was an essential component of Julia Margaret Cameron’s work. As noted previously she celebrated the spots that sometimes occurred on prints due, in some cases, to the movement of sitters during the long exposure times necessary in the Victorian period.<sup>516</sup> The psychological reading inherent in Cameron’s ‘Great Men’ portraits and those of her niece Julia Duckworth (nee Jackson) also communicate movement by presenting multiple aspects of each sitter’s personality. In the same way David Wilkie Wynfield sought to demonstrate in his photographic portraits “that a person’s character was not fixed but instead a mixture of many traits, the different aspects of which would be revealed under changing circumstances.”<sup>517</sup> Julian Cox suggests that this was particularly true of Cameron’s portraits of women which show

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<sup>514</sup> V. Bell to J. Bell, 10 October 1936, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.422.

<sup>515</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 1928, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 336.

<sup>516</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.53

<sup>517</sup> Hacking, *Princes of Victorian Bohemia*, p.15.

elements of the sitters' personalities and individuality while at the same time making them actors capable of expressing a number of different identities.<sup>518</sup>

Cameron's capturing of movement is perhaps most evident in her 1864 study of her niece Julia Jackson in which she appears to have moved slightly during the long exposure time (Figure 226). Cameron's appreciation of the image and its imperfections has echoes in Vanessa Bell's inclusion of blurred and not fully in frame photographs of children in her own photograph albums. Bob Cotton has proposed that the image's inscription: "*Study After the Manner of an Antique*" may reference the 1863 discovery of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* that had been reproduced in engraved form in a number of popular periodicals.<sup>519</sup> Contemporary viewers of Cameron's photographs similarly noticed the power of movement in her images with Sir John Herschel noting in a letter to Cameron that her "Mountain Nymph, Sweet Liberty was "really a most astonishing piece of high relief. She is absolutely alive and thrusting out her head from the paper into the air."<sup>520</sup> Conversely, in order to aid the technical success of her photographs Cameron would place child sitters in such a way that they could be held in place by older girls and women throughout the exposure.<sup>521</sup> Thus consideration of movement from both perspectives was at the very centre of Cameron's technical photographic process.

### **Bloomsbury Artists at Work – Formality Dispensed With**

Earlier sections in this chapter discussed photographs in the 'artist at work' tradition exemplified by George Mayall in *Artists At Home*, photographs of Duncan Grant in his studio in the 1970s, and Vanessa Bell painting Lady Robert Cecil in 1905. The following section identifies how differently Bell, her family and friends chose to picture themselves photographically 'at work.'

Photographs of this kind are sometimes more intimate affairs, tightly focused on the individual and the work in progress, as a photograph of Vanessa Bell painting in her studio suggests (Figure 227). Quentin Bell noted that "as she was the one that took most

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<sup>518</sup> Ford, et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, p.67.

<sup>519</sup> Cotton, *Julia Margaret Cameron and the Allure of Photography*, p.43.

<sup>520</sup> Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House: Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, p.32.

<sup>521</sup> Hinton, *Immortal Faces: Julia Margaret Cameron on the Isle of Wight*, p.88.

of the photographs, it [was] rare to find one of her at work.<sup>522</sup> Other images of Bloomsbury artists in the act of painting are clear expressions of Bell's travel photography aesthetic usually set out of doors away from home. Her 1910 photograph of Roger Fry painting at Studland Beach, Dorset, where the Bell family holidayed with family and friends for four consecutive years between 1909 and 1912 encompasses all of these aspects (Figure 228).<sup>523</sup> The image suggests an air of relaxed informality compared with the *Artists at Home* photographs, the lengthy foreground strewn with elements of the artistic process and the expanse of beach receding into the distance. An image of Duncan Grant at his easel in the French countryside communicates this idea more strongly as Grant is nearly subsumed by the landscape he paints (Figure 229). Both Bell and Grant took great pleasure in painting in the open air and Bell had observed many artists painting in this way during annual family holidays to St Ives between 1881 and 1895 and subsequently in 1909, 1908 and 1910. Helen Dunsmore suggests in the introduction to *Remembering St Ives* by Marion Dell and Marion Whybrow that:

*The artistic life of St Ives was a powerful influence in the development of Vanessa Bell as a painter. [She] would have seen artists painting and sketching en plein air on the beaches, in the back lanes, or on Smeaton's Pier. Newlyn and St Ives were not artistic backwaters. Artists who worked here were on the forefront of new approaches to painting.*<sup>524</sup>

Certainly the colony of artists that developed at St Ives in the wake of J.M.W. Turner's visit there in 1811 was a thriving community which initiated a number painting schools and societies from the St Ives Arts Club founded in 1890, the St Ives Society of Artists established in 1927 and the Penwith Society of Arts formed in 1949.<sup>525</sup> A notable connection between Bell and these movements is that her parents, Leslie and Julia Stephen were founding members, of the St Ives Arts Club and Charles Marriott president of the Club in 1908 was later to review Bell's work in his capacity as an art critic for *The Times*.<sup>526</sup> Painting schools established in the area were keen to advertise

<sup>522</sup> Bell and Garnett, *Vanessa Bell's Family Album*, p.138.

<sup>523</sup> Tickner, 'Vanessa Bell: Studland Beach, Domesticity and "Significant Form."'

<sup>524</sup> H. Dunsmore, 'Introduction' in Dell and Whybrow, *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: Remembering St Ives*, p.ix.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid., pp.12-15.

<sup>526</sup> See footnote in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 351.

their emphasis on developing painting technique out of doors, indeed some schools such as the School of Landscape and Marine Painting were dedicated entirely to this method.<sup>527</sup>

### **Travelling Images – Art on the Move**

In 1939 Duncan Grant was selected with five other artists to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale and was allotted an exhibition room to himself. To select his paintings for a retrospective in this very public venue Grant used photographs to examine his early work. Though British involvement in the Biennale ceased because of the risks associated with transporting works of art following the onset of war, this identified use of photographs by Grant demonstrates again how both he and Bell used photographs to help make exhibition choices at home and abroad.<sup>528</sup>

Grant's use of a photograph for a public commission from the War Artists Advisory Committee (1939-45) to paint a view of St Paul's Cathedral in June 1941 is also documented (Figure 230). The image came from *The Times* and Grant had, after happening upon the photograph, written to the photographer to ascertain the location from which the Cathedral had been photographed. He then used this as a basis for his own high perspective view of the building. Grant is known to have taken photographs of his and Bell's murals for John Maynard Keynes' rooms at King's College Cambridge in 1910 to document the work's progress. He also used his own photographs of camels taken while on holiday in Tunis as a reference point for *The Queen of Sheba* painted in 1912.<sup>529</sup>

Where *Still Life with a Photograph of Nijinsky* suggests a private psychological journey other projects Grant was involved in referenced the concept of travel more directly. In 1932 both Bell and Grant were commissioned by Shell to produce lorry bills for the company's *Everywhere You Go* advertising campaign (Figure 231).<sup>530</sup> During the

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<sup>527</sup> Dell and Whybrow, *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: Remembering St Ives*, pp.15-16.

<sup>528</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.372.

<sup>529</sup> Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant*, pp.69,83,157. Grant also used photographs of Molly MacCarthy in the completion of *Standing Nude with Bird*, (1914) and as has been noted in Chapter Three, Grant was the identified photographer of a series of nude studies of George Mallory in 1912, and other studies of male nudes now in the Tate Archives.

<sup>530</sup> Vanessa Bell contributed in 1931 *Alfriston/See Britain First on Shell* showing a Pointillist view of the Sussex village near Charleston. A summary of Bell and Grant's involvement with Shell and the School

1930s, Shell, under the direction of Jack Beddington, created a very diverse and effective programme of advertisements by noted fine and commercial artists aimed at getting people travelling across by Britain by car.<sup>531</sup> Grant's St Ives poster can be seen as an expression of both his public and private identities (Figure 232). As an advert for Shell it is a proclamation of the joys of motoring and a celebration of British accomplishments, artistic, engineering and otherwise.<sup>532</sup> Privately it records an artist's identification with a specific place. The proof of the design for *St Ives, Huntingdon* is retained in the Charleston Collection. It is large in scale and its colours are bright, and almost fauvist in manner. Inspiration for this work may have struck on one of Grant's visits to Hilton Hall, the home of his friend and former lover David Garnett.<sup>533</sup> Reference to preparatory work for the poster is briefly hinted at in Grant's personal correspondence. A postcard dating from 1932 sent by Grant to Bell from Hilton states: "I am writing this from St Ives in the middle of a sketch so please excuse a postcard. It is a most amazing place for painting any amount of subjects. Unfortunately, I've had to begin 2 of the bridge in sunlight and 1 in grey."<sup>534</sup>

That the movement and rhythm of flowing water and its connection to concepts of place was an early source of artistic inspiration for Bell and Grant is clear. Frances Spalding notes that Grant "all his life kept a distinct memory of entrance to Rangoon harbour in early morning."<sup>535</sup> Similarly the fact that there are in the Charleston Collection seven photographs of another St Ives on the Cornish coastline demonstrates Bell's life-long affinity to a place connected so intimately socially and economically with the sea. These photographs are the product of Paul Brothers, a photographic studio operating in

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poster series of 1934 has been written for inclusion in Charleston's *Canvas* magazine: M. Timmers, *Art for Advertisement: Posters by the Bloomsbury Group*, The Charleston Trust, 2011, <http://www.charleston.org.uk/art-for-advertisement/> [accessed on 6, July 2011].

<sup>531</sup> D. Bernstein, 'Introduction', in *The Shell Poster Book* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982).

<sup>532</sup> D. Bernstein, *'That's Shell – that is!': An Exhibition of Shell Advertising Art* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1983).

<sup>533</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.316.

<sup>534</sup> D. Grant to V. Bell, 1932, Charleston Papers facsimiles, DG VB 412, Special Collections, University of Sussex Library.

<sup>535</sup> Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography*, p.11.

Penzance, Cornwall, between 1906 and 1914. It is likely that Vanessa Bell or a member of the Stephen family purchased the photographs on one of many visits to the area.<sup>536</sup>

The compositional similarities between Grant's work and the Paul Brothers photographs suggests that photographers were keen to depict exterior scenes in a way akin to the tried and tested techniques of landscape painting. This further underscored the close relationship between photography and fine art. The bridge in Grant's composition frames the image as a whole and draws the viewer towards the central focus. A second and lateral point of focus is created by reflections in the water that run diagonally to a fishing boat that sails directly towards the viewer. On the boat a figure leans forward in direct counterpoint to the reflections in the water and is silhouetted against the sail. In the same way, the buildings and tower in the background are contrasted against the lightened area in the sky. Everything in the image is built by blocks of colour giving the image a sense of luminescence and movement. The style and direction of the boat, sail, shape and orientation of the figure in Grant's poster replicates the Paul Brothers photograph entitled *Off Newlyn* (Figure 233). In both cases the figure seems aware of the painter/photographer/viewer and stares intently back. The depiction of the reflection and pattern of the rippling waves created by the movement of the boats is also markedly similar. In both images the reflections help to focus the viewer on the larger image while simultaneously focusing on the fishing boat. Of course the handling in Grant's painting is much broader. The arrangement of buildings and boats lining the shoreline in Grant's image is also apparent in the Paul Brother's photograph *Newlyn Harbour* (Figure 234).

Where the commonalities between the Paul Brothers photographs and Duncan Grant's Shell poster end is in Grant's deployment of colour and it is this element that shows the clear modernity of Grant's river view. Clearly, the colours were partly chosen with the commercial nature of the project in mind, the electric blue, purple and yellow tones contributing to the high visibility of the image designed to be seen at a distance and comprehended quickly on the side of a lorry. It is the sharpness of the colours and the almost abstract handling of the paint into blocks of colour rather than figurative representation that proclaims its modernity.

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<sup>536</sup> Dell and Whybrow, *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: Remembering St Ives*.

An interest in “making the familiar new and strange” was at the heart of Shell’s advertising ethos between 1932 and 1939 and it is not difficult to see how Grant’s image fits into this mould.<sup>537</sup> On one hand he suggests that St Ives will meet all of the visitor’s expectations of tranquil bridges, fishing boats and a hodge podge of houses and harbour buildings. On the other hand, he implies through riotous colour that there is a need to look again with fresh eyes because it is a place that is on the move, a dazzling scene which can still delight in the modern age. In his Shell poster Grant created a view of St Ives, Huntingdon, that harkened back to an inviting and familiar conception of place as exemplified by the Paul Brothers photographs of the Cornish St Ives while encouraging future visitors to sample the brilliant colourful delights of the present - a promise which the most successful advertising offers.

The juxtaposition of past and present conceptions of landscape incorporating water in Grant’s *St Ives, Huntingdon* encourages the same consideration in the Paul Brother photographs which have not been previously analysed. Just how did these photographs fit into Vanessa Bell’s own remembrances of the coastal place where she spent the majority of family holidays in her youth?

It is known that these photographs were the property of Vanessa Bell and acquired around 1907. Certainly they picture elements of a place which for Bell had strong visual memories. Bell had experienced Cornwall both as a child and as an adult and it impacted her development as an artist. She was often recorded in the diaries of her parents and siblings as working on a painting or drawing during the summer family holidays.<sup>538</sup>

Something of Bell’s description is apparent in Duncan Grant’s depiction of the bridge at St Ives, particularly in his handling of colour. Bell’s descriptions of the colour effect of the sun setting on the sea finds its visual equivalent in Grant’s poster though the colour becomes slightly more understated in transition from proof to final version.<sup>539</sup> Beyond compositional similarities the relationship between the Paul Brothers photographs and Grant’s specific project for Shell – to get people travelling by car to see the United

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<sup>537</sup> Bernstein, ‘Introduction’ in *The Shell Poster Book*, p.2.

<sup>538</sup> Dell and Whybrow, *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: Remembering St Ives*, p.125.

<sup>539</sup> See for example Bell’s 1905 letter regarding painting sunsets in Carbis Bay, Cornwall on pg. 69 of this thesis

Kingdom – and the concept of travel related photography is clear. The Paul Brother photographs represent not only movement in terms of what they actually depict, boats moving through the water, but also a sense of place, of being by the sea and connected with all the elements this idea represents. In this way both Grant and the Paul Brothers are communicating similar messages to the viewer.

Vanessa Bell's photographs of her family and friends at Studland Beach, Dorset, in 1910-11 have a private rather public dimension. However, they performed a public function by directly informing a painted work. They can be characterised as travel photography because they depict a physical location away from home. A preparatory work in the Charleston Collection represents the middle step between the photographs and the final painted canvas (Figure 235).<sup>540</sup> Like Bell's earliest travel photography, the primary interest is in capturing movement, incidental moments and a variety of shapes and angles. The Studland photographs are a primary example of Bell using photographs she had taken as a reference point for a painting when she was arguably at the most abstract and experimental stage in her career. Key elements in Bell's photographic approach, the picturing of natural landscapes, casualness of mood, movement of children, and sitters both aware of and oblivious to the photographer, are all apparent in these images (Figures 236-238).

### **“To see movement going on from one to another”: Vanessa Bell's Creation of Defining Images of the Bloomsbury Group**

My own darling, Dec 25 [1944] Charleston

Thank you very much for sending the snap-shots. I see two of mine came out to my surprise. It's a pity they aren't better focused as the composition is rather lovely. Some of you feeding A almost had the effect of cinema on me, one seemed to see movement going on from one to another.<sup>541</sup>

In the above letter Vanessa Bell stresses how important and effective the communication of movement in photographs is to her. It is this element of her technique that makes her photographs a clear example of modernist photography. These images show people in transit, captured unawares or consciously posed in mid- movement. This

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<sup>540</sup> Lisa Tickner provides an analysis of Bell's *Studland Beach* in her article 'Vanessa Bell, Studland Beach, Domesticity and "Significant Form"'.

<sup>541</sup> V. Bell to A. Garnett, 25 December 1944, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.483.



literally is travel photography and what comes shining through is Bell's artistic and personal restlessness and need to move/push forward artistically via the medium of photography. Bell's snapshot aesthetic is characterised by spontaneity. Imperfection is applauded and celebrated. How different from the frozen Victorian tableaux created as preparatory photographs for paintings and murals destined for the public domain.

Bell's eclectic switching from banal snapshot to monumental portrait may not be a sign of amateur 'slippage' but rather a mark of differentiation, a way of representing herself and her subjects with other connotations than those of high art modernism alone...<sup>542</sup>

As Maggie Humm's statement suggests Bell's photography was a different kind of modernist image making. The nature of Bell, and by extension, Grant's relationship with the past and present in their work, the constant tension between the appropriation of and opposition to past traditions is present in their photography. Combining directed and casual movement and capturing figures in a state of unawareness are two recurring elements in Bell and Grant's personal photography. These elements help to shape the quintessential Bloomsbury photograph. In contrast to the staged and stationary poses of figures in Bell's preparatory photographs for paintings, and indeed those of Julia Margaret Cameron and other Victorian portrait photographers in the Charleston Collection, these snapshots demonstrate a modern way of looking at and presenting one's place in the world.

While the previous section focused on the theme of monumentality in Vanessa Bell's photographs, this section focuses on the primary significance of Bell's photographic work, the creation of a personal and entirely modern type of photography, the 'conversation piece.' Though these photographs have roots in the much older tradition of conversation piece painting, they are rendered modern because movement and conversation are now captured photographically rather than on canvas. Bell's interest in depicting conversational exchange between a pair or group of people is evident both in her paintings and photographic work from an early date.<sup>543</sup> Where Maggie Humm sees

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<sup>542</sup> Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures*, p.59.

<sup>543</sup> Other works by Bell on the theme of the conversation piece include *Conversation at Asheham House*, Vanessa Bell, 1912, oil on board, 65.6 cm x 80 cm, University of Hull Art Collection, *Conversation*, Vanessa Bell, 1913-1916, 86.6 cm x 81 cm, Courtauld Gallery, *Angelica Garnett and her Four Daughters*, Vanessa Bell, 1959, Oil on canvas, 100 x 140 cm Collection: Charleston, *Clive Bell and Family*, 1924, Oil on canvas, 127 x 101.5 cm Collection: Leicester Arts and Museums Service.

one of the primary aims of Bell's snapshot photography as a way to achieve "affiliative stasis in family tableaux" and to render figures "stabilized" and "immobilized," I suggest that Bell's interest in picturing movement in a variety of ways was the central facet of her artistic practice.<sup>544</sup>

My focus on Bell's documenting of travel, movement and conversational exchange in her photography is in line with Val Williams assertion that snapshot photography should be established "as a documentary rather than explicitly casual form...[r]emoved from its traditional base of innocent revelation and placed within a concept of documentary order, precise in intention if sometimes eccentric in execution."<sup>545</sup> Unlike Williams who asserts that Bell "propagandised her own life, making what was complicated seem simple, obscuring pain and presenting an idyll," I propose that the camera for Bell was a tool which aided her exploration of movement and exchange in a variety of forms and that it is this element which marks her as an important modernist photographer.<sup>546</sup>

Clive Bell saw movement and modernity as conceptually linked as he pointed out in his discussion of Degas in *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting*:

In one sense Degas may be fairly called 'instantaneous.' It is not that his drawings are like photographs, but that he delights in seizing movement and rendering it, not by a generalized version, but in the ungainly exactitude of an arresting gesture.<sup>547</sup>

Bell's assessment of Degas's 'immediacy' could very well have been applied to Vanessa Bell's photography. Very early in her adoption of photography as a medium of expression Bell sought to capture people and places on the move. A humorous photograph dating from 1896 of her step-brother George Duckworth entitled *G Duckworth starts for Constantinople* is a prime example as are a number of Bell's early experiments in travel photography documented in Chapter One, notably *Portfino out of a train window*.<sup>548</sup> This same sense moves beyond her individual photographs and filters throughout the albums which she compiled and frequently exchanged with her sister

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<sup>544</sup> Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, pp.22-23.

<sup>545</sup> Williams, 'Carefully Creating An Idyll: Vanessa Bell and Snapshot Photography 1907-1946', p.72.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>547</sup> Bell, *Landmarks in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting*, p.191.

<sup>548</sup> See Figure 60. Both these photographs are in Vanessa Bell's Photograph Albums in the Tate Gallery Archives.

Virginia Woolf, creating in Maggie Humm's words "performances of intimate exchange."<sup>549</sup> Again the words *performance* and *exchange* are pertinent to our developing definition of travel photography as it relates to Bell, Grant and the Bloomsbury Group as a whole.

Within Bell's very individual style and technique there was never a complete denial of Julia Margaret Cameron's influence. Val Williams for example notes that: "In her snapshot photography she created not only what Angelica Garnett described as 'her private world, a world from which she excluded all except her most cherished friends and relations, but within which she created a dazzling interior', but also placed in her snapshot burlesque those whom Mrs. Cameron might well have revered."<sup>550</sup> Similarly, there is a connection between Bell's conception of the meaning of a photograph expressed to her son Quentin: "I feel that the subject matter of a photograph should be a little absurd", and Virginia Woolf's characterisation of Cameron in her 1923 play *Freshwater* in which she is depicted leaving England and bequeathing her camera to Ellen Terry with the words: "Take my lens...see that it is always out of focus."<sup>551</sup>

Cameron's photographs of children find parallels with Vanessa Bell's photographic images of children. As one previous sitter, Lady Laura Troubridge, reflected: "...Aunt Julia's ungentle touch touzled our hair to get rid of its prim nursery look."<sup>552</sup> Cameron herself suggested her belief in presenting the naturalness or realness of her sitter, writing to her friend and mentor Sir John Herschel that it was her aim "To get the real child...Nor do I know anyone else who with a very slow lens can prevail on children to wear a natural expression."<sup>553</sup> An excerpt from a letter to Cameron included in *Annals of My Glass House* from a Miss Lydia Louisa Summerhouse Donkins who enquiring about a portrait sitting and stating that she would arrive in an "uncrumpled dress"

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<sup>549</sup> Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, p. 23

<sup>550</sup> Williams, *Women Photographers: The Other Observers*, p.82.

<sup>551</sup> V. Bell in Bell and Garnett, *Vanessa Bell's Family Album*, and Woolf, *Freshwater: A Comedy*, p.85.

<sup>552</sup> L. Troubridge in Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House: Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, p.51.

<sup>553</sup> J.M. Cameron to J. Herschel, Undated fragment, RS: HS 5.17444.

received a reply from Cameron that she could not fulfil the request but had she been able to she “... would have very much preferred the dress to be crumpled.”<sup>554</sup>

Bell stresses her belief in the importance of movement and distortion in painting, photography and life in a letter to her son Julian dated from 1936. Responding to his letter sent with an accompanying essay by Chinese painter Ling Sing Hua, she wrote: “I think we have learnt from the Chinese not simply to represent actual appearances, but try to convey the spirit of movement, character, rhythm etc., and to do that one must perhaps distort and eliminate...”<sup>555</sup> In fact, Bell’s private snapshots shared certain elements with developing modernist photographic technique that was characterised by a “choice of unconventional themes, a preference for close-ups and other unusual angles, attention to effects of light, and experimentation with media.”<sup>556</sup> Yet noticeably there was no interest on Bell’s part to be a technically proficient photographer because what was important to her was to capture people in mid-conversation, mid-flight and to “select... [a] sight from an infinity of other possible sights.”<sup>557</sup> Related to this, the majority of Bell’s snapshots are taken out of doors which, according to Val Williams is a general feature of snapshot photography, that is, to be “closely connected with outdoor rites and celebrations of a domestic nature.”<sup>558</sup> Maggie Humm suggests that Bell’s many group shots of her circle “portray...the density of friendship by means of repetition [and] a desire for a collective “history” at a time of great social and cultural change”.<sup>559</sup>

Vanessa Bell’s photographs capture a range of exchanges within her close-knit family and friendship group who often gathered in domestic settings of her creation, notably at Charleston, which provided an idyllic countryside backdrop to her image making. Many of Bell’s photographs capture her subjects unposed and frequently unaware of the photographer’s presence. Ironically when Bell finds herself the object of the view finder she often appears uncomfortable and avoids meeting the camera’s gaze. Bell’s snapshot

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<sup>554</sup> Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House: Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, p.15.

<sup>555</sup> V. Bell to J. Bell, 25 January 1936, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 406.

<sup>556</sup> N. Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2000), p.125.

<sup>557</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p.10.

<sup>558</sup> Williams, *Women Photographers: The Other Observers*, p.76.

<sup>559</sup> Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema*, p.28.

photography can be understood as a form of travel photography because it was mostly taken when Bell was visiting or being visited. The images, therefore, are not a record of daily life but rather a documenting of gatherings of family and friends. Quentin Bell underlined this in his introduction to a collection of images from Vanessa Bell's albums:

*...although in their way they are eloquent in their description of a manner of life which has gone, let it always be borne in mind that life with the Bells, in particular life at Charleston, was not like this.*<sup>560</sup>

Even when capturing a momentary pause in a conversation or activity Bell's photographs are charged with a sense of animation and energy. Two images of Duncan Grant, E.M Forster, Clive Bell and Mary Hutchinson appear to have been taken one after the other almost instantly, creating a sense that they are moving images (Figures 239-240). Another image with Roger Fry, Desmond McCarthy, Clive Bell, Molly McCarthy and Duncan Grant, later entitled *Morning Conversation* by Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett in a compilation of their mother's photographs, gives a true sense of relaxed camaraderie between friends (Figure 241). They are seated in close physical proximity and the breadth of their smiles betrays a similar mental affinity, a hallmark of the 'Bloomsbury photograph.' A common feature of Bell's snapshots present in this image is the 'labelling' of figures who are almost indistinguishable; here the presences of Molly McCarthy and Duncan Grant are evidenced by her hand and the top of his head. Bell's acknowledgment and appreciation of photographs which depicted people in this way demonstrates a very individual and modern approach to the composition and meaning of the photographic image.

Many 'Bloomsbury' conversations tended to be informally set in a circular seating arrangement with multi-generational participants (Figures 242-243). A looser arrangement is documented in a photograph of a picnic on the Sussex downs though the principle remains the same (Figure 244). When compared to the group photographs of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf as children with family, relations and friends it becomes clear that the stiffness of such occasions, particularly when on holiday as an 1892 photograph from Virginia Woolf's albums shows, was something the sisters later sought consciously to avoid (Figure 245). Taken almost ten years after the Stephen

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<sup>560</sup> Bell, 'Introduction' in Bell and Garnett, *Vanessa Bell's Family Album*, p.11.

family photograph a 1901 photograph from Bell's albums features Principe Filippo Corsini, Virginia Stephen, Principessa Rezia Corsini, Toby and Adrian Stephen and shows a gradual evolution towards the convivial atmosphere that Bell and Woolf fostered in their homes and gardens (Figure 246). Postures are far more relaxed and faces smiling, though there is perhaps a slight hesitancy in the manner in which Adrian Stephen lays in the foreground and Virginia grasps the Principessa's hand.<sup>561</sup>

Vanessa Bell's 'conversation piece' photographs capture the warmth and liveliness of the Bloomsbury Group's relations while also betraying something of Bell's interests as a photographer.<sup>562</sup> Chief among these is a penchant for photographing groups of family and friends who are either completely unaware the photograph is being taken or where only one or perhaps two people acknowledge that they are being photographed. This motif appears again and again in Bell's photography. Though it is uncertain whether the effect was always intentional these images suggest a 'modernist' eye. The viewer's gaze is often drawn to consider the shapes, patterns and angles in the image rather than the appearance of or interactions between the people depicted.

A photograph of Quentin Bell and Leonard Woolf from 1929-30 is notable for its focus on the juxtaposition and angle of limbs, heads and posture, and the angle from which the image was taken and the fact that the figures are barely contained within the frame (Figure 247). An image of Oliver Strachey, Mary Hutchinson, Duncan Grant, Angelica Garnett and Clive Bell in which only Mary Hutchinson and Angelica seem aware of the camera demonstrates a similar sense of capturing an unplanned moment and momentary glance (Figure 248). Again parts of some sitters and the chairs are cut off by the picture frame and, as with many of Bell's photographs, there seems to be a conscious interplay between shadows and light.

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<sup>561</sup> Another mark of the interconnections between art, photography and travel and between public and private identities is Bell's initiation of an incomplete and now missing portrait of Rezia while on holiday in Florence in 1909 – see Humm *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*, p.8. Her early travel related photographs which documented this trip (now in the Tate Gallery Archives) also contain photographs of Rezia.

<sup>562</sup> My colleague at Charleston, Dr. Darren Clarke in his PhD thesis *The Politics of Partnership: Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, 1912-1961* (2012), discusses Bell's paintings in relation to the art historical and social conventions of the conversation piece. I arrived at the concept of the conversation piece specifically in relation to Bell's photographic aesthetic independently though the two discussions inform each other.

Bell, like Cameron, appeared to be always very conscious of how her photographs were lit. An image of Adrian Stephen and Daphne Oliver acts on one hand as a photographic portrait while equal interest is paid to the depth, shape and patterns in the image created by Daphne Olivier's hunched figure, patterned hat and clasped lid (Figure 249). Bell's 1913 photograph of Noel and Margery Olivier at Brandon Camp shows Bell's continued interest in capturing contrasting forms and differing angles (Figure 250).<sup>563</sup> Another image of Mary Hutchinson reflects a similar interest in geometric shapes, particularly the line of the wall mirroring the line of Hutchinson's head covering and the stark contrast of light and shade (Figure 251).

All the above elements are typical of Bell's unconventional photographic portraits. Geometric lines and shapes of walls and doorways are apparent in a snapshot of Roger Fry with Clive Bell in the background. There is also a striking similarity in the 'framing' of the image in this way with Bell's abstract paintings of the period (Figure 252).<sup>564</sup> Fry is out of focus but this may be intentional to replicate the more painterly post-Impressionist techniques of the day. Like many of these paintings the image attains greater resolution the further away the viewer is.

A further example of Bell's 'modernist' photographic eye in a domestic setting has its roots in her early experiments with travel photography, of capturing the world around her on the move. This interest is demonstrated by numerous photographs of modes of transport. Images of cars appear in a number of Bell's albums. Angelica Garnett and Quentin Bell later recalled that: "the arrival of anyone in a motor car was an event of some importance at Charleston."<sup>565</sup> It is notable that, unlike the majority of photographs taken of her of where she was the subject, an image of her sitting in the driver's seat of a car shows her confidently returning the camera's gaze (Figure 253). A similar interest in motoring is notable in Virginia Woolf's compiled albums from the same period. In a letter to her son Julian describing the purchase and attributes of her first car, Bell's

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<sup>563</sup> Brandon Camp was essentially a holiday camp organised by Daphne, Margery and Bryn Olivier in the summer of 1913 according to the tenants of 'Neo-Paganism', enjoying nature and poetry and a simple life. Attendees included Bell, Fry, Grant and Adrian Stephen. Bell was inspired by the sights and sounds of her experiences as this photo suggests, and related works connected to this time by Bell include a painted screen, *Tents* (1913) and painting *Summer Camp* (1913)

<sup>564</sup> For example, Vanessa Bell, 1915, *Mrs. St John Hutchinson*, oil paint on board, Support: 737 x 578 mm, frame: 800 x 642 x 55 mm, Tate Gallery London

<sup>565</sup> Bell and Garnett, *Vanessa Bell's Family Album*, p. 69.

excitement is palpable: “the car is a beauty and I think a great bargain...It’s extremely comfortable and can really hold 5 people quite well. Four would be perfectly at ease touring...”<sup>566</sup> Another letter to Roger Fry suggests that the ease of travel the car offered often meant that visitors overstayed their welcome: “Cars, I see are a mixed blessing...other peoples’ are a terror. Now that everyone owns them one is never safe...The consequence is I have painted a large notice and stuck it up at the bottom of the field to say: To Charleston. OUT.”<sup>567</sup> Driving in a foreign country offered its own challenges:

*Today we actually did go to Marseilles. Duncan drove there, managing the hills and hairpin bends with great competence, but when we got into the town he became terrified of the policeman’s eye, nearly ran into a lamp post and made me take the wheel. I considered I did very well...Marseilles is said to be far worse than Paris to drive in, which I think is true. No one observes any rules, there are tram lines everywhere, large horse-drawn lorries walk slowly down the middle of every street and thousands of people on foot rush in and out and are always off the pavement. It seems to me a wonder we managed at all...*<sup>568</sup>

Transport of different kinds was also documented away from home at Bell’s rented holiday homes in Cassis in the South of France. An image of her daughter, Angelica, and Judith Bagenal journeying back from French lessons in a donkey and cart highlights the literally slower pace of life there (Figure 254). There is a sense with this image of capturing a novel holiday experience and this finds parallels in an earlier image of Bell posed as if leading a donkey and cart dating in March 1911, when she, Clive and Virginia spent three weeks holidaying in Studland, Dorset (Figure 255).<sup>569</sup>

Perhaps the clearest example of exotic transport in Bell’s albums are images of a Gypsy Moth aeroplane which David ‘Bunny’ Garnett piloted to Charleston one day in 1933 (Figure 256). An undated photograph of Bell, Grant, Dora Carrington, Oliver Strachey, David Garnett and Barbara Bagenal and one unidentified sitter sitting in a painted plane

<sup>566</sup> V. Bell to J. Bell, 7 July 1927, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 319.

<sup>567</sup> V. Bell to J. Bell, 4 September 1927, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 322.

<sup>568</sup> V. Bell to V. Woolf, 20 February 1928, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 329.

<sup>569</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 87.



against a cloud covered backdrop similar to the kind seen on seaside holidays, emphasises the novelty of the occasion (Figure 257).<sup>570</sup>

Vanessa Bell's 'conversation piece' snapshots betray her interest in capturing the animated conversation of her family and friends. Similarly many of her photographs reveal a desire to capture moments and show figures physically on the move. An image of Duncan Grant and Virginia Woolf with a dog about to leap for a toy in Grant's hand shows the physical anticipation of the moment to such an extent that the viewer almost imposes movement upon the still frame (Figure 258). Another image of Grant, Eve Younger, Angelica Garnett, Adrian Stephen and Angus Davidson pointing to the sky in a joking manner similarly suggests movement through the adopted poses of the subjects which draw the viewer's eye upwards in the frame (Figure 259).

A photograph of Roger Fry working on a mosaic at his home Durbins, shows him crouched and facing away from the camera (Figure 260). His body is taut with the energy he is expending on his task. He seems oblivious to the camera. The camera lens appears to have used the box structure on the right to focus on so Fry's body is slightly out of focus making it seem in movement. The haphazard positioning of items in the foreground adds to this sense. Lines, angles and patterns of light and shade give the image a painted appearance. Rather than being a simple portrait, the photograph is about movement and emotion. All of these elements are signature aspects of Bell's photography which she also referenced in a letter written to Leonard Woolf in 1913: "...As a matter of fact we do first feel the emotion and then look at the picture, that is to say look at it in its tertiary form – at least I do. The reason I think artists paint life and not patterns is that certain qualities in life, what I call movement, weight, mass, have aesthetic value."<sup>571</sup>

Bell's albums contain repeated images of children at play either alone, with other children or with adults. Again there is an emphasis on action and physical movement whether the image shows rough housing in the garden or a blown bubble rising in the air. These images are about continuous movement rather than momentary stillness

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<sup>570</sup> Vanessa travelled by airplane once in November 1933 with Quentin who was being treated in Switzerland for whooping cough. Duncan Grant flew three times in 1961, 1966 and 1967, to France, to New York and Greece, respectively.

<sup>571</sup> V. Bell to L. Woolf, 22 January 1913, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.133-134.

making them almost cinematic in nature (Figures 261-263). Some images were later translated into paintings. Vanessa Bell's photograph of Quentin Bell in 1915 was later used in her painting *Bacchanale* in 1929 (Figure 264). Again the pyramidal effect of the figures meditates on the theme of exchange and movement (Figure 265). Even a rather conventional photograph like a portrait of Julian, Quentin and Angelica as children still contains an element of movement (Figure 266). The deliberate way in which Quentin continues to pour the sand as the photograph is taken makes it plausible that he has been prompted to by the photographer who was most probably Bell herself.

The cinematic or theatrical nature of Vanessa Bell's photographs of her family and friends finds its fullest expression in her documentation of the Bloomsbury circle's love of dressing up. Quentin Bell noted that for he and his brother this had been a change of interest: "The tendency of the boys at Charleston was to strip off their clothes, nor had they ceased to do so even in 1924, but now a new inclination is observable, a taste for dressing up. It was I think Angelica who was responsible for this."<sup>572</sup> Almost all the photographs of these family theatricals appear to have been taken mid performance which adds to their theatrical quality. That they find precedents in the tableaux and historical, theatrical and mythological narratives of Julia Margaret Cameron and other Victorian photographers is abundantly clear (Figures 267-268).

Movement is also emphasised in Bell's photographic studies of numerous costume designs that she and Grant produced for ballet, theatre and opera productions. Poses struck in these images frequently involve the movement of the body into different positions. Most probably the photographs were assessed to ascertain how fabrics might move and patterns fall into place under performance conditions. Costumes and set designs for *Les Ballet Russes* were also clearly an influence on them in this work. A series of photographs date from Grant's second involvement in 1917-18 with a Jacques Copeau directed play. The first had been an adaptation of *Twelfth Night* entitled *La Nuit des Rois* in 1914 (Figures 269-272). For a production of *Pelleas et Melisande* staged in New York he shared design duties of both sets and costumes with Bell. According to Copeau's request they constructed the costumes but did not sew them so they could be adapted upon arrival in New York. The way in which photography was involved in the design process was detailed by Barbara Bagenal:

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<sup>572</sup> Bell and Garnett, *Vanessa Bell's Family Album*, p. 76.

The craze at this time was ‘marbling’...we mixed the dyes, splashing them on to the large wooden kitchen table, two of us held the material in both hands, laid it on the table than lifting it up until it was marbled for certain dresses. Each dress was of a different coloured marbling...Vanessa and I cut all the dresses and roughly tacked them together so that photographs could be taken.<sup>573</sup>

Grant had previously been asked to design costumes for a staging of *Macbeth* in 1912 and later provided designs for a version of *The Cyclops* by Euripides performed at King’s College, Cambridge in 1923. These commissions were followed by *The Birds* by Aristophanes (1924) and *A Son of Heaven* by Lytton Strachey (1925). Grant and Bell were also involved in designs for the ballet including *The Enchanted Grove* in 1932 and Frederick Ashton’s 1925 production of *Swan Lake*.<sup>574</sup>

Bloomsbury’s domestic theatrical images are often imbued with a sense of exoticism and foreignness, passports for travel to another time and place. A photograph of Duncan Grant dressed as a Spanish dancer in a self-designed cardboard costume betrays his interest in paying homage to his early artistic influences, namely Matisse and Picasso (Figure 273). Of a photograph of herself sitting on Clive Bell’s lap at Charleston wearing a cloak Angelica Garnett noted:

As a child my favourite vice was dressing up. Amazingly lenient, Vanessa allowed me to wear almost anything I took a fancy to. I remember this hooded cloak well; it was of rough white silk with bands of smooth silk and must have been Turkish, probably brought back from their holiday to Broussa years before.<sup>575</sup>

This quotation shows that these and other commemorations of travel, along with the ‘travel photographs’ that Bell, Grant and their circle collected on their travels at home and abroad, were in constant use as costumes and props for a variety of artistic endeavours (Figure 274).<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> D. Sutton, ‘Jacques Copeau and Duncan Grant’, *Apollo*, August 1967, p.141.

<sup>574</sup> Grant’s involvement in the design of theatre décor and sets included, *The Last Postman* (1925), *The Pleasure Gardens* (1927), *Venus and Adonis* (1956).

<sup>575</sup> Bell and Garnett, *Vanessa Bell’s Family Album*, p.81.

<sup>576</sup> This ‘travel photography’ sometimes even directly referenced the act of travel and tourism as one image showing Quentin Bell and Janie Bussy dressed as American and French tourist demonstrates, the conceit of the play being a visit to the ruins of Charleston in the year 2000.

## **“In the photos you send you look very splendid and beautiful”<sup>577</sup>: Art, Travel and Photography and the Next Generation**

Vanessa Bell’s eldest son Julian left England for Hankow China to take up the position of professor of English at the National University of Wuhan on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1935 and remained in China until February 1937. Like his parents Julian Bell was a keen traveller and his parents to a large extent encouraged and provided him opportunities to do so. After leaving school at the age of eighteen he spent a year studying in Paris before going up to King’s College, Cambridge, in 1927.<sup>578</sup> This section provides a postscript to the main body of the thesis and aims to demonstrate that the second generation of Bloomsbury appropriated many of the attitudes towards the act of travelling in written and visual form initiated by previous generations in the family. Julian Bell is particularly focused on here because many of his snapshot photographs taken both at Charleston and abroad are contained in the collection of photographs Anne Oliver Bell donated to the Charleston Trust in 2006-2007 (Figure 275).<sup>579</sup>

The photographs taken by Julian Bell in China show a continued interest in the photography of movement and travel photography and his travel letters, like those of previous generations of his family, suggest intersections between art, photography and travel. Peter Stansky notes that on the journey to China “he wrote his mother very lively, long, colourful, gossipy “travellers letters” about his fellow passengers.”<sup>580</sup> Like Vanessa Bell he shows a particular interest in creating visual pictures in written form, writing “sensuous narratives of landscapes he trekked, hunted and sailed –with traces of imperial attitudes –...enabl[ing] Vanessa to visualise a China she had never seen.”<sup>581</sup> A letter from son to mother in 1936 shows a similar way of describing landscapes and experiences while travelling:

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<sup>577</sup> V. Bell to J. Bell, 1 November 1935, reproduced in Marler (ed.), *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p. 401.

<sup>578</sup> Stansky and Abrahams, *Julian Bell: From Bloomsbury to Spanish Civil War*, p.45.

<sup>579</sup> More detailed explorations of Julian Bell’s experiences abroad are to be found in Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism* and Peter Stansky and William Abraham’s two books *Journey to the Frontier: Two Roads to the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and *Julian Bell: From Bloomsbury to Spanish Civil War*.

<sup>580</sup> Stansky and Abraham, *Julian Bell: From Bloomsbury to Spanish Civil War*, p.187.

<sup>581</sup> Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China*, p.228.

*Our day in the Western Hills spent looking at temples. Some of them are very lovely, beautifully proportioned courts of white marble: lots of bas-relief that seems to me decent decoration, and some good statues. There's a colossal sleeping Buddha in a sort of copper gold who, I fancy, distinguished statesmen send him presents. Then as you will see from the photos, we climbed a small mountain. I really lost my heart to the Western Hill. They're mountains- from the plain very jagged but they roll like early bronze buffalos. And they're a superb size and colour. I really could live very happily in Peking. But I think I prefer Charleston.*<sup>582</sup>

This letter makes clear that Julian Bell was both taking photographs and sending them home for his family and friends to see. In her study of the cultural and artistic connections between Bloomsbury and China Patricia Laurence describes an album of photographs compiled by Julian Bell from 1935 to 1937:

...he included snapshots of himself, tall and handsome in Chinese robes; his favourite photograph of beautiful Ling Shuhua posed between two stone Buddhas; Ling's scholarly looking husband Chen Yuan; the "three talents of Luo Jia"...Ling Shuhua's charming daughter, Ying, as well as friends at Wuhan University; and the beautiful landscapes he explored in Tibet with his student Ye Junjuian.<sup>583</sup>

Like his mother's photographs Julian Bell's images of China and home demonstrate a clear interest in picturing the world according to defined aesthetic principles. There is a similar emphasis on exterior shots and the natural world, experimentations with angles, unusual poses (figures perched on walls are again favoured poses), images reflected in mirrors, and modes of transport from farm vehicles to Bunny Garnett's airplane. Julian Bell's photographs show that he, too, used photography in the creative process taking images of works at different stages of development (Figure 276). More traditional travel photography is also present in Julian Bell's photographs, seemingly intended to communicate cultural difference, from images of national dress and architecture to scenes of harbours and streets (Figures 277-282).

Julian Bell's photographs offer a close resemblance to travel photography images in the Charleston Collection from Julia Margaret Cameron's images of estate workers in Ceylon to views of colonial India collected by Duncan Grant's parents, demonstrating

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<sup>582</sup> J. Bell to V. Bell, 2 January 1936, Tate Gallery Archives, reproduced in P. Laurence, 'The China Letters: Julian Bell, Vanessa Bell and Ling Shuhua', *The South Carolina Review*, 1997, pp.122-131.

<sup>583</sup> Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p.6. This photograph album is now in the collections of Wuhan University Library China. Ling Shuhua was an artist and writer who Bell met during his time teaching at Wuhan University. She was the wife of the dean of the School of Letters and their subsequent affair combined with his desire to fight in the Spanish Civil War brought an end to his time in China. He entered service as an ambulance driver and was killed after suffering a shrapnel wound to the chest.

that the distances between generations were, in many ways, not so very great (Figures 289-90).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has traced the interest and development of Bell and Grant's travel photography aesthetic in order to underline their relationship to modernist forms of image making in a new and unique way. Throughout this thesis, the concept and associated conventions related to travel photography and their connection to Bell and Grant have been discussed in a variety of ways, from physical to psychological. The focus of this chapter has been to bring together the two elements apparent in these forms of exchange, the appropriation of and opposition to past and contemporary conventions of picturing movement and the monumental. Monumentality and movement were both central interests in the philosophical and artistic development of English modernism. That Bell's photographic aesthetic encompassed these two concepts so fully, particularly in the way she used them to create what are considered today to be the definitive images of her and Grant's family and friendship circle and continued to subvert and oppose earlier and contemporary social, and artistic and photographic conventions, resituates her and Grant's role in the landscape of English modernism in a new and decisive way.

## Conclusion

In many ways photography within the development of modernist thought and artistic practice in the early and mid-twentieth century is represented as an incursion between towering developments in art, architecture and interior design. In the case of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, where their role artistically in the advancement of English modernism is today rarely questioned, their involvement with photography remains marginalised, restricted largely to Bell's compilation of a photographic record of her family and friends. Yet at every turn in examining Bell and Grant's private and working lives, photography is there, moving into spaces between preparatory sketches and finished canvases, acting as an intermediary between paintings and objects by Bloomsbury artists and the viewer/buyer in the form of a publicity materials or critical reviews, providing the impetus for physical and psychological journeys into the past, and in the present providing inspiration for future fruits of the creative impulse.

Chapter One of this thesis explored the intersections between art, photography and travel in the Victorian period within related industries, preceding generations of Bell and Grant's families, and in Bell and Grant's own lives. This discussion provided a contextual backdrop for the collection of carte de visite and cabinet images donated to the Charleston Trust in 2006 and 2007 by Anne Olivier Bell which have not been previously analysed.

Chapter Two examined another section of The Charleston Trust photographic archive which has not had critical attention, the extensive collection of photographic reproductions of paintings, sculpture and architecture collected by Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Clive Bell. How Bell, Grant and Clive Bell used these reproductions for activities in the public domain, from exhibition organisation to image selection for publications, has been investigated and compared to Julia Margaret Cameron's use of reproductions and the use of reproductions of Bloomsbury artworks by art critics in contemporary newspapers and journals.

Chapter Three explored the concept of private photographic exchange using primary source materials from the Charleston Collection, including additional images from the collection recently donated by Anne Olivier Bell, selections from Bell and Grant's archive of photographic reproductions (many containing private annotations and, on

occasion, preparatory drawings), and postcards picturing photographic reproductions and containing private messages between members of the Bloomsbury Group and beyond. These materials have been critically analysed and the importance of this form of abbreviated communication for Bell and Grant and their family and friends highlighted for the first time.

Chapter Four connected Bell and Grant's photographic relationship with past and present artistic traditions by distinguishing monumentality and movement as key elements of their interactions with photography. In particular, Vanessa Bell's enduring interest in capturing physical movement and conversational exchange with her camera was identified as a central element of what might be termed definitive photographic images of the Bloomsbury Group. This identification is in contrast to previous critical appraisal of Vanessa Bell's photographs which suggested that it was the static, posed images where those photographed are fully aware of the camera's gaze that define the Bloomsbury Group

This thesis has attempted to redress the balance, to illuminate those spaces where photography has continually created that friction of exchange which led Bell and Grant to appropriate and oppose conventions past and present and push artistic boundaries in order to fashion a new way of looking at the world. Exploration of this photographic movement has encompassed contextual words and images related to the act of travelling and tourism in the Victorian period, traversed the globe from the Swiss Alps to Colonial India and the bustling European cities documented by Vanessa Bell on the verge of a new century in the 1890s.

Public and private exchanges have been traced between the artists and their immediate contemporaries as well as continual conversations with those of an earlier generation. It is not surprising that those photographic images which can be said to define visually Bell and Grant's public and private identities and that of their circle should be found to be not a set of images of people grouped statically together specifically to have their photograph taken, but images of movement. They are images that catch figures out of doors, unawares, in the act, in conversation, in exchange with one another, and these are the defining photographic images of the Bloomsbury Group.



As well as helping to “focus the lens” or in other words sharpen Bell and Grant’s creative eye, photography provided a ticket for innumerable psychological and physical journeys resulting in definitive images by which their engagement with modernity is proved. Here the journey of reasserting the pivotal role of photography in shaping Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant’s private and public identities as artists and individuals ends.

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Divided Into:

- Archives
- Bloomsbury related sources
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